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In this, the Second Book of *The North Wind*, Mr. Mackenzie takes up his narrative where he left it at the end of Book One, without any lapse of time, and carries it forward to finish in March 1937. The sequence of events, therefore, runs on without interruption and the two books form a unified whole. The political and social panorama is continued and developed throughout the whole theatre of Europe and the background of growing international tension heightens the significance of the personal theme. This, again, centres round the Ogilvies and Sterns and it develops a double love story—the young love of Corinna and Sebastian, which is unfolded with exquisite delicacy and understanding and the mature love of John and the Greek poetess, Euphrosyne Ladas.

The publication of this Book marks the culmination and conclusion of 'The Four Winds of Love.' The quintessence of the whole great narrative is contained in this review of Book One of *The North Wind* from *John O'London's Weekly*: "Surrender your attention to the people in this tale, and you realize that they are moving through the diagnosis of a whole phase of European civilization. And you move with them, touched always to a heightened sensibility by the author's outstanding quality. I should call that

[continued on second flap]

THE NORTH WIND
OF LOVE

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

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SYLVIA SCARLETT
GUY AND PAULINE

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FIGURE OF EIGHT
CORAL
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EXTREMES MEET
THE THREE COURIERS

OUR STREET
THE DARKENING GREEN

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FAIRY GOLD
THE SEVEN AGES OF WOMAN
THE OLD MEN OF THE SEA

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THE STAIRS THAT KEPT ON
GOING DOWN

Verses

POEMS 1907
KENSINGTON RHYMES

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THE NORTH WIND OF LOVE

BEING BOOK VI OF 'THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE'

By

COMPTON MACKENZIE

Book Two

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1945

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BOOK TWO

JOHN DID NOT INTEND THAT CORINNA SHOULD SEE MORE OF PARIS than Notre Dame and what other fragments of the Middle Ages survived. His plan was to go and stay for a while at Pierrefonds where with Viollet Le Duc's masterpiece of mediaeval reconstruction and the verdures of the forest of Compiègne to stimulate her fancy she could go on with her history and practise her French. After that he planned visits to Reims and Laon, to Rouen, Orléans, and Chartres, with Brittany in July and August, for Liam O'Falvey had given him an address where he had spent the first year of the war before returning to Ireland to take part in the Easter Rising.

Before leaving for Pierrefonds John wrote to ask Gabrielle Derozier if he might bring Corinna to see her, and on a brilliant May day when all Paris seemed perfumed with chestnut-blossom they went to lunch in her apartment overlooking the Parc Monceau. It was five years since he had seen Gabrielle, and she had not seen Corinna since she acted in John's play *How It Was Sweet* just ten years ago.

"I still expect Victorine to let me in," he told his hostess, with a smile. "More than ever now that you have come back to the Monceau."

"Ah, Victorine is now the mother of quite a charming little boy. I assure you, John, she has disappointed all Camille's bad thoughts about her. Nevertheless, I am glad she did marry because then I could leave the Boulevard des Invalides and return to my beloved Monceau. I could never dare bring Victorine to the Monceau because you know why. It is not my dear old apartment I loved so much. *Enfin*, it is not bad, I think. And let me look at you again, Corinne. She is like you and she is like her mother. John, my dear, I was terribly distressed for you."

"Your letter touched me greatly, dear Gabrielle."

"It was written altogether with my heart."

"I know it was. How's Camille?"

"He will be here very soon. He is *affairé* now with some political business. He is full of politics in these days. And so of course he is looking older. There is nothing which is so old-

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making for a man as politics. You are not political, John."

"But I am rather," he put in.

"*Eh bien*, for some reason you keep your youngishness much more than poor Camille. *Pourtant*, he is certainly older than you. Camille is now . . . *tenez* . . . Camille is now fifty-eight. He is ten years older than you."

"Alas, no, only eight," John corrected.

"But that is impossible, my dear. I remember so well I am three years younger than you. And I am now forty-five."

"Then you're five years younger than me nowadays," said John, with a smile. "Because I am certainly fifty."

"He is, really, Madame," Corinna confirmed earnestly. "He is fifty. Really he is."

"It is quite strange I could make a miscalculation . . . that is good English, I think, yes? *bon!* . . . a miscalculation so big. Camille I know is thirteen years older than I because I tease him often that it might still be very unlucky for him." She laughed that laugh which had warmed the hearts of how many audiences.

"Why might it be unlucky, Madame?"

Corinna was looking ahead to that leap from twelve into the comparative antiquity of thirteen and sincerely anxious to learn all she could about being thirteen years older than anything or anybody.

"Because thirteen is an unlucky number, is it not?" Madame replied.

"Only for dinner," Corinna urged.

"*Ma petite chérie*, when you will marry do not marry a man thirteen years older than yourself, that is quite my advice."

"Well, I won't," Corinna promised gravely. "Only I don't expect I ever will be married."

"You don't think so, *hein?* And when I was your age I did not think so."

Those luminous grey-green eyes affectionately sparkling . . . that red-gold hair without an apparent trace of henna . . . that generous bow of lips still firm . . . yes, it was easier to believe she was forty-five than the fifty-two she really was.

"And so you are going to bury yourself at Pierrefonds," Gabrielle was going on. "There is one place there where you eat not too badly. The Hôtel de la Forêt."

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"That's where we're going to stay," John told her.

"*Ah, bon!* They have a very very good *gâteau maison*, and quite an exceptional *soufflé au jambon*. But if you want some really good food you must take a little drive to Senlis to the *Rôtisserie de Gargantua* and eat their *omelette bibendum aux cèpes de la forêt*. It is extremely delicious. And so is their *pâté Gargantua au foie gras truffé*. And ask for a bottle of Puligny-Montrachet of '22 which is . . ." She wafted a kiss to the far-off vineyard that gave the grapes. And at Soissons you must find some *haricots de Soissons* for Corinne. They are *bonbons, chérie*, and you will make quite a little pig of yourself to eat them. And at the Lion Rouge, there is *truite de l'Ailette au champagne* and *coq au Bouzy rouge*. Have you ever drunk Bouzy, John?"

"I don't believe I ever have."

"Oh, my dear friend, it calls itself a red champagne, but *en effet* it is a pink like the cheeks of Corinne. Almost still, with just a faint—how to say—*un pétilllement, un'tout petit peu de pétilllement*—how can you say that in English, John?"

"The faintest sparkle."

"Yes, but so very very faint. It is like a delicious little bite on the tongue. *Oh, j'adore champagne Bouzy*. And Mesnil too is *exquis*. Oh, I am so hungry as we talk like this. I wonder why Camille is so slow to come. I have quite a nice lunch for you. *Sole de ma Tante Marie*. *Ravioli*—that is a little bit of sentiment for long ago, John. And then *rognons de veau à la fine champagne*. And we drink first a Pouilly and then . . ."

But at that moment Camille Varenne came in, and Gabrielle went off for news from the kitchen of the exact moment when lunch would be ready.

Camille Varenne certainly was looking his age. His thin hair was now quite grey, and with the lankness that poor health gives more than the years. The bilious eyes with the minute blebs upon the lids seemed more bilious now, and the pallor a sign of exhausted vitality rather than the familiar complexion of the Latin temperament. However, he welcomed John with cordiality and was charmingly ceremonious with Corinna, complimenting her upon her French accent.

"I hear from Gabrielle that you are now engaged on politics," John said in French.

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Varenne shrugged his shoulders, his fine white hands expressing futility in a gesture.

"The confusion is unbelievable," he replied. "Unbelievable. Daladier may hold his Cabinet together for a month or two, but not for longer. It is financial chaos. And now the Boches begin. Ah, my friend, you are really impossible people, you English. Now, now, now. If we do not stop them now we will never stop them."

"I agree with you."

"Ah, you also think it is dangerous to let this Hitler establish himself. You see what they are doing with the Jews. That is because these Boches want to assure themselves that they are becoming strong again. The Boche requires always the evidence that he is strong. If he kicks and beats and tortures and plunders some thousands of wretched Jews, and finds that nobody interferes with him, then he will look round for somebody else weaker than himself. The same business over again. And then somebody else. And so bit by bit he will begin to feel himself strong enough to defy France and England. So it is now that we must stop him. Now. Now. But England? Ah, no, England is still so sure that the French are a nation of *hystériques*. I am really surprised sometimes that your ambassadors do not exchange Notes with Charenton instead of the Quai d'Orsay. I am sure they are written for madmen. But I know my fellow-countrymen, and I know that there will come a moment at last when they will sit back and say, 'It is impossible. We have had enough of it.' And . . . I think you will see Monsieur Hitler march over Europe."

Camille Varenne began to march in despair up and down the rose and pale-green Aubusson carpet of the *salon*.

"I couldn't begin to explain the workings of the English mind over this business," John told him. "I'll leave our politicians out of it for the moment. The ordinary Englishman has no ill-will toward the German. He respects him for having given him a run for his money in the last war. The ordinary Englishman thinks he must be a jolly good fellow to have been so nearly successful in beating such a jolly good fellow as himself. He supposes that the German must recognize his own admiration for him, and that the German has no reason to feel ashamed of being beaten by an Englishman. The Englishman doesn't recognize the possibility of being

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beaten, and presumes that no other nation ever seriously contemplates doing more than put up a good fight against him. The ordinary Englishman has been a little shocked by the knocking-about of the Jews, but says to himself that he mustn't judge the German too harshly because after all the German is a lower breed than himself and can't help being a cad and a bully. It is up to himself to show an example of gentlemanly behaviour and try to teach the German to follow it. The ordinary Englishman doesn't believe that the German can seriously contemplate making war again on somebody by whom he knows he must be beaten. Then several years of intensive propaganda have persuaded the young Englishman that perhaps after all the Germans were not treated fairly at Versailles and the same propaganda has led him to believe that the reason for this unfair treatment was the intransigence of the French. And because some atrocity stories were shown to be inventions the same young Englishman, who you must remember is essentially an innocent insular youth, has jumped to the conclusion that the Germans never committed atrocities."

"But this is idiotic," Varenne exclaimed in consternation. "Why does not your Government take steps to instruct your people?"

"Unfortunately we have in England at present a Government of dismal mediocrities such as we have not had since the decade after the Congress of Vienna. This Government is afraid to warn the people of England of what threatens ahead and some of its most prominent members prefer to risk the future of the country rather than the future of a dishonourable coalition. And can you assure me that French politicians are any better than ours, Varenne?" The dramatist made a grimace of disgust.

"Oh yes, here in France it is frightful," he admitted.

"Neither of our two countries wants another war. You are more exhausted than we are because you had already had *Soixante-dix*. You feel that a third war against the Germans may be too much for you. We don't feel that, but we are a lazy nation and the idea of being called upon to make a second effort such as we made in 1914 is ineffably distasteful to us."

"Then, why not act firmly now when the effort would cost comparatively little?"

"You ask for logic from the English. They have no logic. What is more, they regard their lack of it as their most precious

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asset. They are faintly aware that it may get them into a war, but they are profoundly convinced that if it should it will be lack of logic which will guarantee their final victory. One of the popular stories of the last war, which everybody told at first-hand, thus showing how much he was in accord with it, was of the German officer who was supposed to have said to an English officer, 'You will always be fools and we shall never be gentlemen.' It's an extraordinary thing that a nation should be proud of being considered foolish, but there it is. We Scots do not think we are fools, and so the English are able to persuade us that we rule them."

"*Je ne comprends pas les Anglais,*" Camille Varenne declared gloomily. "*Pas du tout, pas du tout,*" he repeated in a tone of weary finality.

And just then Gabrielle came in to warn her husband and guests that lunch was on the point of being served.

"You like my puss-cat?" she asked of Corinna who was stroking a big white Angora cat on the window-seat. "He is so very lazy."

"He has one green eye and one blue one," Corinna exclaimed. "I never saw a cat with different-coloured eyes."

"He is like the English, mademoiselle," Varenne told her. "They have one eye for the Germans and another for the French. And one eye is terribly blind. So it is with Poupou. He cannot see so well with his blue eye."

"*Venez, venez,*" cried the hostess. "Enough of your politics, Camille. *À table.* Enough of political things. John, my dear friend, I forbid political things at lunch. There is no chance perhaps to make a revival of *How It Was Sweet*? I think it would have quite a little lesson for this moment when France and England must absolutely act as one *vis-à-vis* this strange monster Hitler."

John shook his head.

"I'm afraid the English don't accept lessons from their dramatists. The only people they listen to with respect are their bankers."

It was after that delicious lunch when they were drinking their coffee and Armagnac that Gabrielle suggested a visit from John and Corinna to Larnay-Mozère.

"Camille and I will go there in the end of July and stay till perhaps half of September. I would so much like to show Corinne

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all the places where I have been a little girl. My father has left me the house. My brothers were not wanting it no more. They make all their wine business in Lyon. So Camille and I pass always our summer vacation at Larnay. And sometimes we make a quick little visit at Easter. Now, please say you will come, John."

"Shan't we both be rather a nuisance? And we have Corinna's nurse with us."

Gabrielle was translating her invitation into French for the benefit of her husband. He shook a forefinger at John.

"It will give Gabrielle and me a great deal of pleasure," he insisted earnestly.

John, perceiving that he meant what he said, promised to cut short their stay in Brittany and reach Larnay-Mozère by mid-August. Gabrielle clapped her hands.

"That is splendid, John." She turned to Corinna. "My dear, we will make such excursions, you and I. There is a *pâtisserie* in Lyon—oh, well, you cannot guess what bonbons and cakes you will eat there. *Monsieur ton père et monsieur mon mari* can talk their politics how they like. We will quite enjoy ourselves, I tell to you."

"I like Madame Varenne most awfully," Corinna said when she and her father had left the apartment and were walking down the Boulevard de Courcelles. "Is she a very good actress?"

"A splendid actress. And I was lucky enough to have her as my first leading lady."

"I would like to see her act," Corinna said.

"Well, I'm afraid she won't be acting again till October, and by that time we shall have to be home."

"I suppose next time I go to stay with Aunt Prudence and Uncle Noll I'll be able to fly with Uncle Noll in his Moth?" Corinna enquired cautiously.

"Yes, I suppose you will," John agreed, after a moment's hesitation. "That is of course if your cousins don't all think they've got to fly, because I know Aunt Prudence doesn't want them to fly yet."

"Oh, of course not," Corinna exclaimed in scorn of such a consequence. "They're much much too young. Sally won't be eight till this June. She's years and years and years younger than me."

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When she's as old as I am now I'll be seventeen. And that's really grown-up, isn't it? - I expect I'll be able to fly myself then."

"You think you will?"

"Don't you think I will?"

"Well, I suppose if your head is still as much in the air four years hence you will be able to," John admitted, a little ruefully.

It was already dusk of a thunder-threatening July night when John and Corinna reached the house of Yves Mazy in the rocky moorland at the edge of a forest in the wild heart of Brittany. Ar Zour was a long building of grey granite one side of which was bounded by a pool covered with white water-lilies that was overlooked at the corner by a turret and suggested a castle wall above a moat. The centre of the house was taken up by one large room with a huge open hearth and rafters which the smoke of centuries had turned to ebony. Panels of oak along one side concealed the recesses of the beds in which the family in its true sense slept. The master of the house had the turret to himself and a separate door on the other side of the building gave access to four rooms set apart for his *pensionnaires*. Yves Mazy was a poet, one of those *Bretons-bretonnants* who had cherished for years the dream of a Brittany which would cut itself off from France and thus preserve its ancient heritage from the decadence of modern industrial civilization. Before the war the movement had made much progress, and when some imbecile bureaucrat at the French Ministry of Education had tried to include with the elimination of all *patois* the Breton language it had seemed for a brief hour as if an outraged country might rise again as fiercely as the Chouans in the days of the Revolution. After the war, however, *la petite patrie* of Brittany became too prosperous to assert itself against *la grande patrie* of France, and now a monthly sheet called *Breiz-Izel* was all that expressed Yves Mazy's dream. Not quite all, for only the previous August some irreconcilables had blown up Boucher's statue at Rennes which represented Duchess Anne doing homage to her husband Charles VIII. That the incorporation of Brittany with France should be symbolically expressed by showing Brittany on her knees had infuriated Bretons when the statue was unveiled just before the war, and exactly five hundred years after the union of 1532 the marble

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monument so humiliating to Breton pride had vanished in fragments.

Yves Mazy at the time of John's visit was a man of sixty whose body was as slim and active as it had been thirty years ago, whose hollow dark eyes were still bright with the inspiration of youth, and whose jet-black hair was not yet even lightly dusted with grey. The poet was unmarried, but a married niece whose husband, a *lieutenant de vaisseau*, had been lost in his submarine during the war presided over the domestic arrangements of Ar Zour. Madame Rosmadec was a woman of about forty, plump and pleasant herself with a daughter of eighteen called Tiphaine, a tall dark girl with a low sweet voice. She used to tell Corinna wonderful stories of the enchantress Vivien who was still seen sometimes by charcoal-burners in the wild wooded ravines not far from Ar Zour.

The splayed window of the guests' sitting-room looked out across the rocky moorland to the dark edge of the forest, and every morning in that embrasure Corinna mingled the history of the thirteenth century with Arthurian tales and the niceties of French syntax. John himself was working at a play and he left the exploration of the magical countryside to Corinna sometimes in the company of Mairi, sometimes in that of Tiphaine. The forest of Compiègne had been much larger, but with its well-kept roads and trim carrefours and innumerable signposts it had been far less exciting than this much smaller but so much wilder Breton forest where any adventure might be expected.

Late one afternoon Corinna came back from an expedition overflowing with a discovery. Tiphaine had taken her to a chapel in the forest some miles even from the nearest cottage where Mass was seldom said, but where she declared was the loveliest rood-screen imaginable.

"It was frightfully mysterious, and as well as Our Lord on the Cross and Our Lady and St John there was a little knight in armour kneeling at the foot of the cross with his arms round it, and the two thieves on their crosses were there, and the thief who didn't believe Our Lord was the Son of God was frightfully twisted up and had a most horrible face, and there was a stone table at the side where the sabot-makers bring their sabots to the saint; but wait, Father, wait, who do you think the saint is?" she asked in much excitement.

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"St Corentin?"

"No."

"St Tudy?"

"No."

"I give up."

"St Pedoc!"

"Our own St Pedoc in the Meneage!" John exclaimed.

"Oh, Father, I suddenly wished you hadn't sold Nanphant. I love the island, you know I do. But I just suddenly had a feeling I wanted to be in Cornwall."

"Vivien has been casting her enchantments over you," John told his daughter. "Be careful she doesn't imprison you in a thicket of hawthorn like Merlin."

"It's a terrible pity we live now, isn't it?" Corinna sighed. "I'd much rather have lived long ago." Her eyes stared out of the window to where the dark edge of the forest lay along the moorland. "Oh, it was so lovely, that chapel. There were frightfully old trees all round with twisted branches, and in the grass there were some enormous red and yellow toadstools, and there was a holy well with green slime on it. So I didn't drink any of the water, and besides I saw a frog looking at me. Oh, yes, and there was a statue of St Pedoc. There isn't a statue of him at our St Pedoc."

"I'm afraid our Pendarves ancestors in Cornwall didn't guard it so well as their Breton cousins would have done," John said.

"It's St Pedoc's Pardon next week. We will go, won't we?" Corinna begged.

"We certainly will."

It was John's habit after Corinna had gone to bed to spend the rest of the evening with his host in the turret, where they discussed Celtic and Iberian lore often till far into the night.

"There are two people I should like you to meet," John said one evening. "One is my cousin Henry Pendarves and the other is a Highlander called Archie Beaton. You've made Ar Zour a stronghold of the mind."

"It will not outlive me," said Yves Mazy. "The stones of Carnac will endure, and Bretons like myself must be content to let them represent us to posterity."

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*O Breiz-Izell! O Kaêro brô!
Koad enn hé c'hreiz, môr enn hé zro!
O Brittany! O beautiful land!
Forest within, and the sea around!*

But if material progress continues to move as fast not even the beautiful land will remain. There will be no forest left, and *avions* will reduce the sea to a merely decorative importance."

"Who wrote those lines?" John asked.

"They were written by Brisieux. He was a Breton poet of Irish descent born in the intruding French town of Lorient in 1803. He was educated in Arzanô, which is a small village not many miles from Quimperlé where to this day the inhabitants try to preserve our old Armorica. Now it is becoming touched with self-consciousness. You will find the same thing in Aran and the Blaskets. Most of his life was spent away from Brittany in Flanders and Italy and in the Midi. He wrote the most beautiful of all Breton verse. The land that desires a poet's song must exile him. He wanted to be buried in the heart of Brittany, but when he died in 1858 Lorient claimed his bones, and he lies with his monument in that Frenchified town—a symbol of the lost independence of his native land."

"And is there no possibility that independence will return?" John asked.

Yves Mazy shook his head.

"It would in any case be too late."

"Is it too late in Ireland?"

"It goes against the grain to say so, but I have a dread that it is. When my friend Liam O'Falvey was living with me here before the war and from time to time mysterious Irishmen would spend a night or two in mysterious colloquy, when in fact the plotting was feverish I could not help responding . . . but . . ." He broke off.

"I suppose we all feel the same despair about the future," said John. "Archie Beaton, whom I do want you to meet, says we're survivals kept alive by the evolutionary spirit in case something goes wrong and we are required to point out the road that should have been followed."

Mazy looked round his small room in the turret, littered with books and papers, nothing upon the plastered walls except a water-

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colour of the great dolmen of Locmariaquer.

"This has turned to an ivory tower," he said.

"Yet here was planned the explosion which shattered the Rennes monument last August," John reminded him.

"It did not echo in the hearts of my countrymen. *Les Bretons ne bretonnent plus.*"

"What seems to me perhaps the fault is that we are all preoccupied too much with regionalism," said John. "We all struggle vainly against a preponderancy, but we do not offer a larger ideal to the young people on whom after all the dreams of people like you and me depend for their fulfilment."

"It was a movement of young people which enabled Ireland to shake off English rule," said Mazy. "And what have they made of it?"

"You have been disappointed by the fruits of Irish freedom?" John asked.

"When I was there two years ago it seemed to me that they were suffocating themselves in a *petite vie de province*. My friend Liam O'Falvey who I can assure you set out from here as if to some sublime quest, who did in fact narrowly escape with his life . . . set out for the Golden Fleece and has found instead some very good mutton, set out for the Holy Grail and finds that the future of Guinness is of much more importance for his country, set out to recover the Holy Sepulchre and plans instead for himself a respectable tomb in Glasnevin Cemetery . . . yes, my friend O'Falvey was hardly recognizable two years ago."

"Well, he lost his seat in the Dail in the January election," said John, "and has now returned to his history of scholastic philosophy. He may grow thin again. But to come back to what I was saying. Can we hope to justify ourselves by what another Irishman—Maurice Doyne—calls contraction?"

"Yes, I know him. I had a letter from him the other day. He tells me he will come this autumn to make his home in Paris. Too late, I think. Paris has always at the back of its mind now the thought of another *débâcle*. What were you saying about contraction?"

"I had a short talk with De Valera, and I was rather depressed to find how completely uninterested he was by the possibility of a Scottish revival. True, he may have thought rightly that I was

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inviting him to speculate about an impossibility. But it was clear to me that he had no conception of any advantage to Ireland from such a revival. The utmost he could envisage was a revival of regionalism, and he obviously didn't believe even that could occur. I suppose if a Welsh Nationalist had asked him about Wales he would have taken the same attitude of courteous indifference.

"But, Mazy, don't you think his vision of Ireland would be enriched by the prospect of what I'll have to call Pan-Celticism? I don't believe that Ireland alone can sustain itself like Andorra. Yet, if Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, and Brittany could form a Celtic federation, with regional autonomy, it would genuinely weigh in the balance against Pan-Americanism or Pan-Germanism or Pan-Slavism. I should be glad if France took the lead in joining such a federation, for I believe that France is the fine flower of Celticism and that what we so-called Celts mean by Celticism is really Iberianism, or if you like Armoricanism. If France did effect such a federation, I am convinced that the English, who themselves are more Celtic than they seem to realize, would prefer such a federation to a Pan-Germanic one. They would have to choose one or the other because obviously the only other alternative would be absorption in an American federation.

"I don't believe that the Latin bloc is a possibility, because the French are fundamentally incapable of getting on either with the Spaniards or the Italians, and the French are not Latins. At the same time, if this Celtic federation came into being, I believe that Portugal, Spain, Italy, and perhaps even Greece might join it. In short, what I want to see is a federation of all the truly maritime states of Europe except Holland, Scandinavia, and Finland, which could join a Germanic federation. In due course these separate federations would unite in a European federation, and finally in the fullness of time a world federation would be achieved.

"I am looking far far ahead, but you yourself have admitted a doubt whether independence has not come to Ireland too late and whether independence for Brittany is not too late. I have the same doubt about Wales. But we still have an outlook on life radically different from the outlook of the Teuton or the Slav, and even from what we call the Anglo-Saxon. Can we not use that common outlook not merely to preserve but to extend our influence on the destiny of man?"

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"I think before anything such as you suggest is possible we will have another great war," Yves Mazy said.

"Such a war might be the means of giving practical shape to this cloudy dream of mine," John responded.

"Or it might utterly disperse it," the Breton argued. "The war will come from Germany. That is certain. But will Germany gain Russia as an ally? That is possible. And that would be terrific. I do not see how any person on the Continent could resist such a combination. France would be swept out of existence. Even England might be swept away with her."

"I don't believe either France or England *can* be swept away. It may be the purest superstition, but I do not believe in such a possibility. If, however, Germany did join with Russia in an assault on Europe they would have to turn and rend one another, and that would allow our maritime federation to establish itself. However, this is arguing about particular contingencies, and I don't want to argue about them. All I want to argue is the necessity of the Celtic fringe working together for a common civilization and culture if it is to preserve itself. I honour what Ireland has achieved, but if I were an Irishman I should demand not isolation, but a predominant place in the future destiny of Ireland and Britain."

"I do not think we Celtiberians can ever become successful imperialists," Yves Mazy declared.

"We have helped other Imperiums a good deal," John pointed out.

"As woman helps man," said the Breton poet. "I thought, rashly as it turned out, I had discovered for myself something remarkable not yet observed, which was that nations possess sex. Thus England, Germany, Turkey, and Spain are masculine. France, Italy, Ireland, and Poland are feminine."

"And Russia?"

"Ah, there I am a little puzzled. But I think perhaps more feminine."

"And America?"

"I think we must accept the new world all through as a mixture of both, which in effect produces a kind of sexlessness."

"Certainly the difficulty the English and the French have in grasping each other's point of view is the masculinity of the one

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and the femininity of the other," John agreed. "I once expressed that in a play. And certainly this strange attraction that the Germans and the Turks have for the English is the kinship of a radically similar outlook on life, though of course the English are more civilized than either, due no doubt to the great mixture of blood. Incidentally, it may be significant that male homosexuality is so prevalent in all these nations. That is true also, I am told, of Scandinavia, which again is predominantly masculine. And also of the Pathans who are the most masculine of all the Indian nationalities."

"Bismarck did not observe that, though I agree it is significant, but Bismarck had already formed the conclusion about the masculinity and the femininity of certain nations and used it as a basis for his diplomatic approach."

"I didn't know that," John said.

"I can't give you the exact reference, but I came across the observation in one of his letters, I think. I was quite mortified to find another example of Solomon's ancient wisdom."

"And nations resolve themselves into sexual differences too," John added. "The north of France and the north of Italy are comparatively masculine. In Ireland Ulster is more masculine and in Scotland the Lowlands and the East. Well, I think that adds force to my desire for a federation of what I must continue to call Celtiberians round France as the predominant and the most highly civilized Celtic centre. After all, you Bretons have found cooperation with France much easier than the Irish ever found cooperation with England, and undoubtedly the strong masculine element in Scotland had the same effect. I think the Welsh and English are much more mutually antipathetic in fundamentals. What are the Jews, by the way?"

"The Jews perhaps are the most exactly balanced of any race," Mazy speculated. "I have a very strong feeling that they have all the good and the bad qualities of both man and woman. They are, I think, the most illustrative examples of that Divine experiment in the creation of human nature. I am much exasperated by them, but I am also much in awe of them. If I had had a missionary vocation I would have dedicated it to the conversion of the Jews. I do not believe that there is any chance for the fulfilment of Christian ethics until the Jews are all Christians. Without them

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Christianity is hopelessly incomplete and still, if I may so put it, competing with Buddhism, Mahommedanism, and several other religions. We Christians have been too easily pleased by the conversions of barbarians like Germans and Hottentots. I have an idea that we shall not see the conversion of the Jews until Russia, after emptying itself of supernatural revealed religion, is converted again, and perhaps not until China has become Christian. I tell you this, my dear Ogilvie, if I heard to-morrow that all the Jews had been baptized of their free will I would always be on the look out for the Second Coming, as now from the window of my tower I look for the first sign of spring."

The Pardon of St Pedoc was held in the first week of August, and at intervals along the path by which the pilgrims marched in procession to the chapel in the forest there were statues of the saint in leafy bowers pleached by the sabot-makers whom he protected. It was a warm still day and there was not nearly room for all the worshippers within. The green clearing in the forest was thronged with men holding their beribboned hats reverently in front of them, with women in full black skirts and caps that showed the group or hamlet to which they belonged, and with many children.

Yves Mazy with Madame Rosmadec, Tiphaine, and their guests had places close to the rood-screen and the stone table on which the sabots were heaped as an offering to the saint; and at the Elevation John felt that he was being bodily held aloft in mid-air by what seemed an absolute tangibleness of ardent faith diffused upon the air by the worshippers.

"Oh, it was wonderful, sir," Mairi said to him when they were wandering back to Ar Zour in the wake of the returning pilgrims who had not stayed to dance and revel. I don't think we're as grateful to God as we ought to be in Moidart. They just take it all for granted, and it's only really when somebody goes away that you feel so sorry for all the poor Protestants in Scotland who would feel so terribly out of it at such a lovely festival as this. I wish we could have a procession like this at home in Moidart, but I daresay the weather would be spoiling it on us."

"That was an unusually long speech for you, Mairi," John told

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her. "The longest I ever heard you make."

She blushed.

"My tongue was running away with me," she confessed. "But I could not help it. I was just nearly crying because it was all so wonderful. And I was never paying any attention at all to St Pedoc when we were at Nanphant. I'm sure I'm not surprised the holy man left Cornwall and came to Brittany." Then she turned round to where Corinna was walking with Tiphaine. "Corinna, don't please kick your shoes against all the rocks. You won't have shoes fit to be seen if you do that."

"I'm sorry, Mairi. I was thinking about something else," Corinna said.

"Talking of the fairies, that's what she will be talking of with Mademoiselle Tiphaine," Mairi said sympathetically. "Mademoiselle knows so many stories. And some of them are the very same stories I've heard my grandfather tell. Och, I used not to listen very well. I thought it was too old-fashioned and likely not true at all, but when you hear the same stories in another country you're after knowing they *are* true. There's nobody in Moidart could have brought stories to Brittany, and nobody in Brittany was ever coming to Moidart."

It was a few days after St Pedoc's Pardon that John said farewell to Yves Mazy.

"There's something extremely distasteful in handing a bill to a guest," said the poet wryly.

"Except that it allows the guest to feel he has not outstayed his welcome," John replied, "and also to hope that he may come again. I should find it difficult to tell you how much I have enjoyed these weeks at Ar Zour."

"I am being paid for a great pleasure," the poet insisted.

"And I shall worry you until you agree to spend some time on my island," John went on. "I want to have a Pan-Celtiberian Congress—you and my kinsman Henry Pendarves and Archie Beaton and Liam O'Falvey and a delightful Welshman called Elwyn Evans. Next year perhaps. Will you come?"

"I don't believe I shall be able to resist it."

"Then I can say *au revoir* with conviction," John declared.

And all too soon the car was on the road to Rennes. Ar Zour beside the little pool and the dark edge of the forest along the rocky

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moorland had vanished, and the sweet low voice of Tiphaine was heard no more.

"I feel rather as if Vivien had enchanted everything away," said Corinna.

The Place de la République in Larnay-Mozère shimmered in the stilly heat of the August afternoon without sign of life except where the two waiters of the Café de la République drowsed among the empty tables and chairs set out on the pavement in the shade of a striped awning of cream and orange, and where beneath the trimmed acacias at attention round some monument to bygone political zeal a gaunt skewbald hound slavered at his haunches in pursuit of fleas. The hoarse chimes in the Gothic tower of Saint Denis began to strike three, followed two seconds later by the shallow chimings of the clock in the town-hall, which some twenty-seven years ago had been presented to Larnay by a free-thinking mayor to commemorate the relief secured to the State by the law of December 1905 from any further financial responsibility for the religious organization of Catholics, Protestants, or Jews. While the pigeons were fluttering down from the church tower to escape that insistent voice of time, the honk of a motor-horn was added to the chiming clocks as a dark-blue Peugeot saloon drove across the Place from the Rue de Lyon and stopped in front of a biscuit-coloured house with freshly-painted green jalousies at the corner of the Rue de Grenoble.

John, Corinna, and Mairi alighted, and a minute later they were being welcomed in the cool shady hall at the end of which through the open french-windows was a view of the walled garden aglow in the sunlight.

"John, I am so glad you are here. *Ma petite, embrasse-moi.* Mairi, here is my maid Amélie. She will show you where is your room and the room of Corinne. *Camille, où es-tu?*"

Camille appeared from his small study, which had once upon a time been the counting-house of old Monsieur Derozier, to greet the guests.

"You stayed at Vichy last night," he remarked in mild astonishment.

"Yes, I don't know why," said John. "I always think it's

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rather a dreary place in spite of its *maquillage*."

"You are right, John," Gabrielle declared. "At which hotel did you stay?"

"At the Albert Premier."

"It is perhaps the best. Did you eat well?"

"Yes, we had a capital *poularde*."

"*Poularde Marivaux*? Yes, I know. It is not too bad. And was the wine good?"

"I had a capital bottle of burgundy: Hospices de Beaune."

"What year?"

"1915."

"Ah, bon. You have chosen very well," she declared, nodding approval, as she led the way into the *salon*, a large room, the sage-green panels of its walls picked out with tarnished gilt, the blinds drawn against the sun.

"But I shall take you one day to Col de la Luère. It is no distance at all from here. Chez la Mère Brazier. My dear, you will eat a *volaille mère Brazier* which is beyond anything you can imagine. And we will drink a Châteauneuf-du-Pape of '23 which is very, very good. And we will go to Vienne also. There are two restaurants there and both are so good. At the Pyramide et Point they have a *gratin* of crayfish tails. My dear! And a *truite farcie braisée* in *vin porto*." She wafted a kiss toward the blue Rhône by which the restaurant stood. "And we will drink with it a Condrieu of perhaps '23 or '24—they are both excellent. And just across the road at the Place de l'Aiguille there is a terrine of *gibier* which is—well, there is really no word for how good it is. Oh, and the *crème viennoise* . . ."

"Ah, enough, enough," her husband exclaimed. "This is a feast of the Prince Barmecide."

"Attends, Camille. You will take John, and I shall take Corinne to see her room. John, *figurez-vous*, what a pleasure I give myself to put Corinne in my own little room of my childhood. It is just as I have left it when I first went away to the *Conservatoire* so long ago."

The hostess went off with her small guest to that small room which looked across the old stable-yard and a corner of the walled garden to the tower of the Church of Saint Denis. "Once I used to think that church tower reached right up as far as *paradis*,"

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Gabrielle Varenne told Corinna, "and that the pigeons perhaps were flights of angels when they flew to perch on the top of it. But that was when I was much more tiny than you, Corinne. This was my room from when I was eight years old. *Petite chambre tellement aimée*," she murmured to herself tenderly.

"Were those your books, Madame?" Corinna asked, her eyes upon the little bookcase of tattered old volumes beside the bed.

"Yes, those are my old friends," Madame Varenne replied. "*Paul et Virginie, La Petite Fadette, Les Malheurs de Sophie*, and all the rest of them. And now you are looking at my old bed. You think perhaps it is too hard and narrow for you."

"No, no, Madame, I wasn't thinking that at all," Corinna exclaimed, horrified by the imputation of such ingratitude from a guest. "I wasn't really. I was thinking I could smell lavender."

"*Oui, tu as raison.* It is the *lavande* in the sheets. That brings back to me so much, that faint sweet *arome*—lying awake in the golden morning and listening half in a dream to such old familiar small noises—to the milk-pail making a little clink-clonk, to a broom sweeping, sweeping, sweeping the yard, and to the flap-flap of the pigeons' wings, and in spring-time to a bird singing in the cherry-tree. *Hélas*, the old cherry-tree is gone now. It blew away. . . ."

Corinna's eyes were opening as wide as to one of Tiphaine's tales of Vivien's sorceries.

"No, not blow away, blow down," Madame Varenne corrected herself. "You must make good my English just as I shall make good your French," she said. "Because though my mother was English she was more like a Frenchwoman and I am not so very good with my English speaking. Yes, the poor old cherry-tree blew down in a great wind when I was just your age. I cried over it. And here is your *garde-robe*." She opened the doors of the big wardrobe of unpolished chestnut wood. "How strange," she sighed. "I was quite expecting to find my old frocks hanging up inside, but you see it is empty. I am sure it will be very happy to have some frocks inside it again. And my pictures, do you like them? Notre Dame de Bon Secours and Fra Angelico's Annunciation with my dear patron St Gabriel, and St Joan of Arc when she was wounded at Orléans . . ."

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"I went to Orléans with Father, and we saw St Joan's house. I wish *she* was my patron saint. St Hilary is *my* patron saint, and I think he's rather dull. Well, of course Our Lady is too, but she has such an awful lot of people, hasn't she?"

"I wonder if you were too late for the *saumon* at the Jeanne d'Arc restaurant?" Madame Varenne enquired in sudden anxiety.

"We did have salmon, I think, in Orléans."

"*Ah, bon, bon*, it is so good, the Loire *saumon*. It was seeing Bernhardt in Jules Barbier's play *Jeanne d'Arc* that made me want to be an actress myself. And I have played Joan of Arc in a picture. It was an experience, but for me the films are always so bad because they will soon spoil the theatre altogether. It is a more heart-rending tragedy than any played upon the stage, this murder of the theatre by these dreadful films. *Alors, ta petite chambre te plaît?*"

"I love it. Thank you most awfully for letting me have it, Madame."

"My dear, for me it is so much a pleasure, and for my little room too. And now, listen, we will go into the garden and see if we can find a jargonelle. You know what is a jargonelle?"

Corinna knitted her brows.

"I don't think I do."

"It is a pear—a very delicious pear when one can find it just ripe upon the tree. I will go and put on my big straw and we will leave your father and—*tiens—ton oncle. Ton oncle Camille!* I am so amused to call him *ton oncle* because he has once written a play called *Mon Oncle* and has made such a fun of uncles, so when you say '*oui, mon oncle*' he will jump like a grass-hop."

Presently they were in the big walled garden, where even the zinnias seemed weary and waiting for the dews of dusk. There were still plenty of jargonelles on the espalier, slim green pears freaked by the sun with sullen rose. Gabrielle Varenne stroked and gently squeezed several of them with her emerald-ringed fingers until she had chosen the victims, when she pressed a nail against the sappy stalks one after another and handed them to Corinna. Then she led the way to the old rustic summer-house by a great walnut-tree and invited Corinna to eat her fruit, the faint methylic exhalation of which mingled with the drouthy smell of the old summer-house as they sat back in the wooden garden-chairs gazing out through the open windows at the sunny garden and the pigeons

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drowsing on the church tower and a pair of white butterflies chasing each other against the unbroken azure of the sky.

"Oh, look, Madame," Corinna whispered.

A lizard had appeared on the rustic sill and was waiting there with upreared palpitating throat and jewelled eyes for a fly to alight within reach of its swift tongue; but a moment later it was gone.

"This *pavillon* is what I used to think always was my own little house," said Madame dreamily. "I remember once I came here long ago to write a letter to your father about a play."

"What was Father like when he was young?" Corinna asked.

"He is not so very old now," commented Madame as she turned to look down at her small companion from under the big straw that she was wearing.

"He's not a very old man yet," Corinna agreed:

"*Mais pas du tout!*"

"I meant when you first knew him. When was that?"

"More than twenty years ago," Gabrielle Varenne sighed.

"Well, what was he like then?" Corinna pressed.

"He was charming, I assure you, but really very like what he is now. I think he could still wear the same clothes, and that is not what I could do. You are very fond of your father, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Of course I am. But aren't all girls fond of their fathers?"

"*Ah, oui, naturellement*, but not every girl has a chance to have so much of her father's attention. I think you are very lucky, Corinne."

"Yes, I am, I know. Aunt Prudence told me that."

"*Ah, cette Prudence*. She was such a charming girl. You are quite a little like her I think. When I acted in your father's play ten years ago I was so sure she must marry Lord Erpingham and it was my fortune to give her very good advice."

"What was the advice you gave, Madame?"

"Now I am going to say a sad thing to a little girl, and that is perhaps I will tell you one day if ever you ask my advice for yourself. But you are now just a little too young."

Corinna sighed deeply.

"It's frightful the way one's always too young for anything that's at all interesting. That's why I like Father. He never says I'm too young."

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"And he always tells you everything?"

"Not everything, but he never says I'm too young. He just says I can't tell you that. But he doesn't often say that. He almost always does tell me. No, I was thinking of Aunt Elise and Mairi and Aunt Prudence and now you. Can I call you Aunt Gabrielle?"

"But surely you must call me Aunt Gabrielle. *Outre cela* do not forget *ton oncle*. I have nephews and nieces quite big to whom I am *ma tante*, but never has anyone dared to call your Uncle Camille *mon oncle*. Yes, yes, he will jump just like a grass-hop. Of that I am sure. And tell me, Corinne, would you like to be an actress one day?"

"No, I'm going to fly," Corinna declared firmly.

"To fly? *Mon dieu*, what a curious idea! Do you mean you want to fly your own *avion*?"

"Yes, of course."

"But what does your father say to such a curious idea?"

"Well, I think perhaps he thinks it's something I shall grow out of. But I shan't, I shan't really, Aunt Gabrielle. I've made up my mind absolutely. I want to fly over Mount Everest.

Aunt Gabrielle shook her head.

"I have talked many, many plans and listened to many plans for the future in this *pavillon*, Corinne, but never did I dream to hear somebody say she would fly over Mount Everest. It is really quite a fantasy, you know. But why do you have such a low ambition? Why do you not plan to fly to the moon?"

"Well, I'd like to fly to the moon," Corinna affirmed. "Only isn't there something about not being able to breathe?"

"Otherwise you would not at all mind flying to the moon? And if you could not fly back to this old familiar earth, that would not incommode you at all?"

"I expect I'd rather come back, yes. But perhaps when I'm grown-up they'll discover how to breathe on the way to the moon," said Corinna hopefully. "And then there is Mars," she went on.

"Ah, the moon is already not enough?"

"Well, if they discovered a way of getting to the moon I don't see why they couldn't try to get to Mars."

"*Vraiment, c'est dommage que ton père ne soit pas Jules Verne.*"

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"I love Jules Verne," Corinna declared fervidly.

"*Alors, ça ne serait pas une paternité de convenance.* But you are right to have your dreams," Aunt Gabrielle went on. Once I was dreaming myself that the tower of Saint Denis reached as far as to the gate of *paradis*. And even now that is not *tout à fait une illusion perdue*."

At that moment the chimes struck four. The drowsing pigeons fluttered up to circle the tower in papery flight until the reverberation had died away and they could perch again upon the leafy crockets of the pinnacles or strut and coo upon the parapet.

"They are just as much annoyed by time as we are," Aunt Gabrielle declared. "You because he comes so slowly, I because he runs so fast, and those foolish birds because he makes such a clamour. And now we must fly like the pigeons and see how *ton père et ton oncle* are amusing themselves."

They found Camille Varenne and John in the little room which had once been Monsieur Derozier's counting-house, kept as a kind of old toy to provide him with the illusion that the wine-exporting business was still being conducted as it was once upon a time before his sons had brought it up to date with the big office in Lyon of the firm of Derozier et Fils. Even now Gabrielle never entered her husband's study without half expecting to see the rosy cheeks and shining bald head and silvery curls of old Monsieur Peccoud, her father's clerk, sitting in the corner at his high desk—Monsieur Peccoud in his black alpaca jacket of so many summers putting his quill behind his ear as he got down from his high chair and came bowing across the little office to greet her. He had died a month after her father, both of them in sight of ninety. They lay within hail of one another in the cemetery and could discuss the notable vintages from the slopes of Paradise of those Rhône wines whose renown they had served so well on earth—Hermitage la Chapelle and Châteauneuf-du-Pape, Condrieu and Côte-Rôtie, Tavel, St Péray mousseux, St Péray sec, red Cornas, and Clairette, that sweet white wine of Die. Ridiculous fancy. In the eternal Champs d'Élysée all seasons would be superlative and they could rest for ever unperplexed by the problem of when to buy and when not to buy. Still, there they lay forever within hail of one another.

"Ah, what have I said to you, Corinne?" Gabrielle exclaimed. "*Tu vois comme ton oncle a sauté.*"

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"It was your prompting, was it?" Varenne said, with a dark twinkle in his eyes. "I might have known as much."

At the beginning of September John received a letter from Arthur to say that his grandfather was dead and that he and his grandmother would be in Paris by the middle of the month to examine the prospects of a legal career there, and that if they were favourable he should settle down to the study of French law. He hoped that John and Corinna would still be in France, because it would be difficult to persuade Mrs Langridge to come to England.

"So I think Corinna and I must make our expedition to Provence at once," said John. "We have had the most enchanting time here, but you really must be getting tired of our company by now."

"That is so stupid I will not say nothing—anything about it. *Au moins*, you will stay here till next week when Edmond Floriot comes to have dinner with us!" Gabrielle asked.

"*Je vous avertis*," said Varenne solemnly. "*Le général Floriot est la barbe*."

"I do not know why you call poor Edmond Floriot so boring, Camille. He is quite in agreement with what you think about politics," Gabrielle protested.

"And that is why I find him so boring," her husband replied. "Général Floriot always says just what I think but never so well as I can say it myself, and surely that is the most boring thing in the world. To disagree with somebody and find he cannot speak so well as yourself is agreeable enough, but to agree and find that . . . *ah non, ça c'est la barbe!*"

General Edmond Floriot and Gabrielle had known one another all their lives. He was the son of a Larnay contemporary of her father's, and once upon a time, before she had succeeded in persuading her parents to let her accept an engagement as a professional actress, Edmond, then a lieutenant in the artillery, had shown signs of falling in love with her. He had been ordered out to Papeete, which was one of the ways the clericals at the Ministry of War paid out Dreyfusard officers, and he had come to say farewell to his family, full of depression about his military future. It had been in the old rustic summer-house shaded by the walnut-tree that he had made a clumsy attempt to embrace her under the influence of

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her declamation of Racine. And then he had gone out to Papeete and with the strong Freemason influence behind him had come back not so long afterwards to a successful career in the army. That was thirty-three years ago.

Gabrielle related the story when she and her guests were awaiting the General's arrival for dinner.

"And I remember I tried to console the poor young lieutenant, who thought that going out to Papeete meant the end of his career, by saying to him in my most stern and tragic voice:

Aucun chemin de fleurs ne conduit à la gloire.

And I can tell you he was excessively *émotionné*."

"I'm not surprised," John declared. "Do say that again."

And round the *salon*, candlelit as always when Gabrielle was giving a dinner-party, that line of La Fontaine's majestically rolled once more.

"What a voice!" John sighed.

Gabrielle's husband was nodding agreement to himself when General Floriot was announced.

The General was a portly, rather pompous little man drawing near to sixty, with closely-cropped grey hair and gold pince-nez.

"My dear Général, it is so good of you to come," Gabrielle exclaimed.

"Madame, it is at once a duty and a pleasure," the General assured her with a touch of sententiousness that made Varenne's ironical lips tighten.

"The motto of the military life, I assume, M. le Général," he observed with a very faintly exaggerated courtesy which his wife noticed, for she brushed with a light finger the fine and generous bow of her own lips.

"Let me present an old friend of mine from England, Monsieur Jean Ogilvie."

John and the General shook hands ceremoniously.

"Monsieur Ogilvie has written for me two plays in which I have enjoyed success," Gabrielle added.

The General looked politely surprised, like so many Frenchmen when they are informed that an Englishman has achieved anything beyond the bounds of commerce.

"Were you not attached to Général Sarraïl's staff at Salonica,

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mon général?” John asked. “I had the honour of lunching with the commander-in-chief and I am sure I remember you.”

The guest’s eyes brightened. After all, he was not going to spend an evening in the *coulisses*.

“*Ah, vous êtes militaire, monsieur!* Yes, I was at Salonique. Yes, I was one of the gardeners of Salonique as Clemenceau used to call us. Nevertheless, in the end we have justified ourselves I think.”

Varenne perceived a chance to be contradictory.

“You consider that Salonique was justified? Pardon me, but I do not entirely accept that point of view. I consider that we were severely handicapped on the Western Front by the necessity of maintaining the Army of the Orient.”

“*Mais, monsieur, les Bulgares,*” the General began eagerly. “*Les Bulgares menaçaient toujours notre flanc . . . les Bulgares, vous savez . . . si les Bulgares . . .*”

“*Ah, mais non, mais non alors . . .*” the hostess protested. “We are presently going to have a *vol-au-vent d’écrevisses*, and for such a dish *les Bulgares* are not at all the *hors-d’œuvre* I shall recommend.”

“*Les Bulgares . . .*” John and Varenne began in unison, only to be immediately silenced by the conductor.

“*Camille, je t’en prie!* John, I am quite surprised at you! *Zut pour les Bulgares!* Ah, dinner is served? Please come and leave the Bulgars to starve by themselves. They have committed quite enough abominations without spoiling our *vol-au-vent*. *Monsieur le général*, give me your arm, please. Let me tell you that a charming young lady and I have fished the *écrevisses* for you this morning. No, it is useless for you to turn round your head. The charming young lady is the daughter of Monsieur Ogilvie, and he is a most hard-hearted father who will not permit her to sit up to late dinner.”

Gabrielle refused to allow the discussion of present politics or past strategy during dinner, and when the Sèvres dishes heaped with peaches, pears, and small golden-netted melons were put on the table she made a *corbeille* and announced her intention of taking it up to Corinne so that over their brandy and coffee the three gentlemen could argue over what topic they liked.

“*Même les Bulgares, si vous voulez,*” was her parting shot.

The General turned to John.

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"I think that the Germans commence to show how little they have forgotten. You have seen they have just carried off two French subjects from the Saar? And now we read their insolent reply to the *démarche* made by our ambassador and your *chargé d'affaires*. It appears as if they were secretly encouraged to suppose that England will not act strongly whatever they do."

"There is a wave of pacifism sweeping my country," John explained.

"It's a pity it should coincide with this Nazi victory," the General observed.

"It is the habit of earthquakes to cause tidal waves," Varenne added. "Both can be excessively destructive."

"Well, you know I take as pessimistic a view as yourself about the future," John reminded his host.

"Monsieur, I shall tell you something," General Floriot announced gravely. "It is extremely necessary that your statesmen should not succeed in giving an impression in France that England is capable of sacrificing the common interests of Europe to her own commerce with Germany. There was always a party in France which distrusted England, and I have observed that its opinions have made a considerable advance in military circles. It will not require very much to persuade the country that England is willing to leave France in the lurch, and if once that conviction hardened, it might become the mood of France to say peace at any price even if it must mean an accommodation with Germany. We shall go as far as possible to make your Government stand firmly beside us, but if we fail do not be surprised by a *volte-face* of despair. I see the socialists both here and in your country are prepared to take advantage of the situation to propagate their own ideas at the expense of everything else. You agree with me, monsieur, about such a one as Blum I know," he said turning to Varenne.

"Yes, I agree," Varenne murmured, obviously wishing he could say that he disagreed.

"Your socialists and our socialists make a great clamour about disarmament," the General went on, looking at John again, "and at the same time they very fiercely condemn Fascism. They are obsessed by the entirely ridiculous notion that if they disarm sufficiently the German workers will be so very glad to dethrone Monsieur Hitler and agree to perpetual peace. The reason for this

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entirely absurd confidence is first of all the success of the Russian revolution in taking Russia out of the war and, secondly, what they believe was the success of the workers at home in taking Germany out of the war. That the Russians were taken out of the war by the Bolsheviks is true, but it does not offer a valuable lesson for French and English socialists, because there is no possibility of parallel circumstances arising in France or England. In any case it was the Russian armies which collapsed. The other fallacy is more subtle and therefore more dangerous. The Germans ever since Versailles have made an immense propaganda that their armies were never beaten in the field, but that they were incapable of further resistance owing to the collapse of the home front. What is now forgotten by everybody is that the German armies in the field were defeated by Marshal Foch, with good help, *bien entendu*, from the English and the Americans. The German armies were being defeated, and were on the point of being utterly smashed to pieces by the allied arms, and it was because they knew that they must be completely smashed that they accepted the overwhelming terms of the armistice; it was not because the home front had broken down."

"I agree, I agree," said Varenne impatiently. "And I am sure Monsieur Ogilvie agrees."

"*Ah, bon*," said the General, with a grave inclination of his close-cropped head. "But it is now the duty of artists like you to explain this to the people. We soldiers have no eloquence. We are not accustomed to words."

"*Ah, pardon, mon général*," Varenne put in, "I think you are very eloquent."

The General, oblivious of the sarcasm, accepted the compliment with a bow.

"But I have no eloquence with the pen, *messieurs*. And that is why I appeal to artists like yourselves. • It is absolutely necessary to warn people that disarmament will be fatal. There are moments—it is *pénible* to say this—but there are moments when I believe it is the aim of our socialists to precipitate another war in the expectation that they will benefit from the collapse of France."

"I don't think that," said Varenne. "I regard socialists as imbeciles rather than criminals."

The General shrugged his shoulders.

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"I fear for France. I fear from my heart. And France fears for herself. It is fear which causes one Cabinet crisis after another. If England would only say to us 'Come, let us march again together,' these political uncertainties would melt away. If Clemenceau were alive he would march without England . . . Clemenceau, he sighed. And now Poincaré is very ill."

The General stopped and lifting his glass of cognac he drank a silent toast to the dead Tiger, and to the health of Poincaré now on his deathbed.

On the following morning when Corinna was making her farewells to various friends she had made in Larney-Mozère and Camille Varenne was working in his study, John and Gabrielle walked in the garden for a while and then sat in the summerhouse.

"And so you are quite determined to go to-morrow, John?" she asked.

"Yes, we really must. I want Corinna to see Avignon and Nîmes and Orange and hear something of Provençal song and sun-burnt mirth, and then we will go back to Paris and meet my stepson. It has been a completely delightful visit and I can't thank you enough for all your kindness to Corinna."

"It was very easy to be kind to her, John. *Elle est tellement toi.*"

He looked round at her. It was the first time she had used the second person singular for years.

"And how did you like my old beau? Camille cannot abide him. But he is quite harmless, I think, when he will not talk about the Bulgares. *Oh là, là! les Bulgares! Quelle race infecte!*"

"I dislike them extremely, which is natural, but why do you dislike them so extremely?" John asked in some surprise.

"*Tu sais, John, un Bulgare—parvenu mais très très riche—m'a pluquée il y a . . . n'importe*, it was a very long time ago . . . before I met you. He was the only man in my life who has—how do you say *plaquée* in English?"

"Jilted," he told her. "I now dislike Bulgars more than ever," he added. "But tell me, Gabrielle, when was the General in love with you?"

"Ah, that was nothing. 1900. It was in the late summer like now."

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"I was at Fontainebleau in that golden summer. And you of course were quite a little girl."

"*Mais non*, I was eighteen."

"Were you?"

"*Comme tu es méchant! Comme tu es malin!* You remember how old I am. *Pourtant*, I think I am not looking more than forty-five."

"Of course you don't. But you'll have to remember not to indulge in reminiscences about the General's *béguin* for you, because according to your adopted age you would then have been only twelve."

"Enough of calculations, *mon ami*." She was silent for a moment. "And we have parted twenty years ago, John, you and I. It was sweet the little time of love we had. You were a charming lover, John. And here in this old *pavillon* on this old rusty iron table I used to write to you in America just twenty-one years ago. I wonder what I was writing."

"I'd better confess at once that I destroyed all your letters when I got married."

"But naturally. Marriage is a bad *bureau* for old letters. I remember it was the time of the *vendanges*. It was a good enough vintage. And there was such ravishing moonlight I used to lie in my hard narrow little bed where now Corinne has been sleeping and think what a waste of such moonlight. *Enfin, la petite Corinne* is more practical than I. She will fly to the moon herself one day, so she has told me. Are you pleased that she will fly, John?"

"She must choose her own profession. I'll probably resent an aeroplane a good deal less than I should resent her choice of the wrong young man."

"But even then she will have to choose, John. He might be the right young man for her."

"Oh, yes, I've faced up to all these unpleasant contingencies of the future."

"Prudence is happy in her marriage?"

"Very."

"I am glad. I gave her very strong advice to marry Lord Erpingham. She could not pass all her life being faithful to a dead lover."

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"Certainly not."

"But now I will tell you something quite frankly, John. I am a little jealous that Corinne is not yours and mine. You are not angry with me because I say that?" she asked softly.

John took her hand for a moment.

"And you know, Camille is very clever," she went on, with a reflective shake of the head. "I have said to him the other day what a pity it was that Corinne was not our daughter, and like the lightning he has answered, 'You mean what a pity she is not *your* daughter.' And I know very well what he was thinking. He is not jealous of you now at all, John. That would be entirely ridiculous. But he really was very, very jealous of you once upon a time. Victorine knew it so well. She was very naughty, *cette Victorine*. Amélie is a good girl, but I miss very much my Victorine. She knew so much of my life. She understood me so well. I see her quite often; I am *marraine* to her little boy. Her husband is in some *usine*. She is comfortable and content. *Alors, que voulez-vous? C'est la vie*. And now I must go and see about the *déjeuner*. I have so much enjoyed finding nice things for you to eat."

"And how I've enjoyed eating them!" John declared fervidly.

"Ah, t'es un bon copain," she sighed, "*et au fond moi je resterai toujours cabotine*."

They smiled at one another affectionately, pressed each the other's hand and emerged from the drouthy summer-house perfumed by the past into the sunlight.

Mrs Langridge and Arthur were staying at an old-fashioned hotel in the Rue St-Honoré where she had stayed with her husband on her first visit to Europe more than fifty years ago.

"And dear goodness, Mr Ogilvie, it doesn't seem to have changed very much since then," she told him when they met.

"Well, I warned you, Grandma, that you'd find it more comfortable at one of the newer hotels," Arthur reminded her.

"I know we would, Arthur, I know we would," she agreed. "But it won't be for so long. We'll find ourselves a nice little apartment very soon. Are you fond of candy, Corinna?"

Corinna nodded.

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"Come along then, dear child, here's a box of bonbons I found for you yesterday. I believe they're all pretty good. But you just dig around for yourself, honey."

"Thank you awfully, Mrs Langridge."

"Grandma, dear," the old lady corrected. "I know it's kind of difficult to have a new grandma dropped down on you like this. But you'll just have to put up with it. Look now, Arthur, why don't you and Corinna go and explore this funny old Paris for a while, and pick up the years since you saw one another last. Your father won't mind sitting here and having a little talk with Grandma."

"Come on, Corinna," Arthur invited her with obvious relief. "Say, have you been up the Eiffel Tower yet?"

"No, I haven't. I'd simply love to go."

"That's fine," Arthur decided. "You don't want to lug that box of candy around with you. I'll bring it to your hotel to-night when I come to dinner."

When the two young people had left the sitting-room the old lady murmured to John,

"There's nobody who wouldn't recognize they were brother and sister. Their eyes are set the very same way and they both have their mother's smile. Arthur has her complexion too. Corinna's roses are not American Beauties."

"Arthur's looking much better than he was when I saw him last, two and a half years ago. And it's more than four years since he and Corinna saw each other."

"Such a lot of years for them," she said. "Such a few for me," she added gently. "But do sit down and make yourself comfortable, Mr Ogilvie, in one of those stuffy old chairs."

"You're missing your cane rocking-chair, Mrs Langridge," he said with a smile.

"Oh, I haven't forgotten that old rocking-chair," she assured him. "It's in my will. And I've ventured to add a little something for that dear child of yours—oh, nothing very much," she said quickly. "Just some old trinkets and rings and brooches. They would have been left to Athene, and I would like little Corinna to have them."

"That's very kind of you, Mrs Langridge."

"No kindness at all, Mr Ogilvie. Indeed, just the very reverse. Just an old woman's sentimental desire for a moment of remem-

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brance. Tell me, what do you think of Arthur's plan to practise law in Paris?"

"It struck me as an excellent plan."

"His father was always so very, very fond of Paris."

"And is buried here," John added.

"I was wondering whether you thought it was a piece of selfishness on my part to encourage this plan of Arthur's."

She was sitting with her face to the window and her grey eyes, into which the light was streaming, appeared sightless.

"I guessed why Arthur's plan was welcome to you," John told her. "But my only reflection was pleasure that so sensible a project should at the same time be one which would please you."

"He has been so very considerate, dear boy," she murmured. "I know he would have dearly loved to come over and stay with you on your island after that engagement was broken off; but he didn't like to leave me in case Mr Langridge should pass away and I would be alone. And I feel I ought to suggest now that he should go and spend some time with you and leave me here in Paris."

"It is out of the question," said John firmly. "Perhaps next spring or summer if you were settled in your apartment . . . but, certainly not now. In any case I have a great deal of work to do, and I want Corinna to do plenty of work too. She has had a wonderful five months in France and now she must settle down for a bit. It has been splendid to get a glimpse of Arthur and you . . ."

"Indeed it has been perfectly wonderful, Mr Ogilvie," she put in.

"And I'll have a good talk with Arthur to-night," John concluded.

"You make things very easy for a selfish old woman, Mr Ogilvie. Too easy, I'm afraid. The only excuse I have is that I know just how selfish I am."

"I have reason not to regard you as a selfish old woman," John said. "You have no cause whatever to reproach yourself for wanting as much of Arthur's company as possible. Moreover, the very fact of his feeling under an obligation—an affectionate obligation, more than affectionate, a very loving obligation—is good for him. He has the prospect of an easy life in so far as he will not have to worry about the necessity to earn his own living at the start. He requires responsibility as a counterbalance."

"Dear goodness, he very nearly got responsibility as an overbalance," said the old lady with a smile that lighted for a moment

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her pale wrinkled face like a December sunbeam.

"Indeed he did," John agreed. "That was a merciful escape for which he had you to thank."

"You helped, Mr Ogilvie. You helped wonderfully by your tact. But most of all it was his mother who broke up that most uncomfortable business. We've already had all that out together, you and I. Will you smoke a cigar?"

"You'd rather I smoked a cigar than a pipe?"

"Why, yes, I sure would. I suppose you'll think that's a funny old Yankee prejudice. But I prefer the smell of a cigar."

"I remember now," John said, taking out his case.

"The smell of a pipe always gives me a touch of indigestion. My father always smoked cigars. And Mr Langridge smoked cigars. Nobody in America smoked pipes when I was young. I know to-day they've become quite the fashion, and lots of Arthur's college friends smoked pipes. What with their pipes and their cigarettes I used to sigh for the old customs when gentlemen always smoked cigars."

And John, puffing his excellent but so oddly named Romeo and Juliet cigar in the old-fashioned sitting-room of that old-fashioned hotel in the Rue St-Honoré, floated back upon the smoke as far as his visual memory could carry him into the past of tight flounced skirts and bustles, thinking that for his hostess these would be as little remote as to him now seemed the hobble-skirts and extinguisher-hats of 1910.

And when he left the hotel in the Rue St-Honoré to walk back to his own in the Rue Castiglione he found himself snatching at lines from Walt Whitman's lament for Lincoln:

*When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.*

*In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-washed palings,
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I
love,
And she would have been a child then rocking, rocking in that old cane-
seated chair.*

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*Come, lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate death.*

*I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as I thought,
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd*

*Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
I leave thee there in the dooryard, blooming, returning with spring.*

Sooner or later delicate death to that mother who suffered, to that mother who now in Paris could lay on her son's grave lilac and roses and bitter chrysanthemums.

John took his stepson that night to dinner at a gourmet's Valhalla in the Place de la Madeleine where the occasional faint tinkle of plate or fork and the gentle hum of conversation murmurous as bees about their business did not profane the devout hush.

They ate *huitres Belon, homard au champagne, entrecôte grillé bordelaise, fruits frappés aux liqueurs, fondue de gruyère neuchâtélaine*. They drank Graves des rois, 1921, Château Margaux 1918, and some particularly good 1887 brandy.

It was not surprising that Arthur was talkative.

"You ought to know more in England than you do about Franklin D. Roosevelt," he assured John. "You really ought. I tell you, John, he's a marvellous man. He is really. I've been backing him for the Presidency ever since the summer of '31. I think it was getting so keen on him that convinced me Blanche Hallway and I wouldn't be happy if we got married."

"I've heard rich Americans accuse him of most things," John said. "But that's a new crime. Breaking off engagements."

"Well, Blanche could not grasp what a big man he is," Arthur explained eagerly. "And, after all, she had been on the road—she ought to have realized what was happening outside Manhattan. But she was too anxious to think like Society with a capital S. I

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told her it was damn silly. She seemed to think just because all the millionaires were panicking about their support of the Metropolitan Opera House that if another Calvin Coolidge wasn't elected President the American theatre would collapse. And Mrs Halloway used to madden me, sitting back and holding forth about Governor Roosevelt, as he was then, as if he was somebody who'd arrived in Albany by accident. "Governor Roosevelt may be a man of quite good social position, Arthur. I believe he is. I've never heard anything to the contrary, Arthur. My friend Mrs Wilbur J. Merpaw assures me that he has quite a good social standing up the Hudson. Though, of course, that's not the same as having a real standing in Virginia or Maryland."

"And who is Mrs Wilbur J. Merpaw?" John broke in on Arthur's vivid imitation of what might have been his mother-in-law, to ask.

"Oh, some *nouveau riche* dowager who hopes to be received in Newport before she dies. Mrs Halloway was always talking to me about her, but I never listened. Anyway, she's of no importance. In my opinion if Roosevelt hadn't been elected last November there'd have been a revolution in America, and once a revolution started there it would be some revolution. Certainly all the millionaires thought it was coming. Lots of them stayed down at their country places and laid in stocks of provisions—canned meats and sugar and coffee—thinking they could hold out while the revolution was at its worst. The father of a friend of mine at Harvard had bulletproof shutters put on all his windows at his farm in Delaware and had as many sub-machine-guns as a gangster chief in the palmy days of prohibition. Well, Roosevelt got in and with one speech on a nation-wide hook-up pulled the country out of the biggest jam it had been in since the Civil War. That was when most of the banks had stopped payment and he was facing a paralysed country at his Inauguration last March. You don't know what it was like, John. Nobody does over here. Millions of gold dollars had been shipped to Holland and Switzerland. These patriotic fellow-countrymen of mine were preparing to eke out a miserable existence on Dutch guilders and Swiss francs for the rest of their lives. Yes, that's true, John. Like a lot of *émigrés* from France or Russia. Only, they'd taken good care to line their exile with gold. Why, last March when the President issued a

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proclamation taking control of the export of gold there was six million dollars worth of gold already in the strong-room of the *Paris* which was waiting for another three millions worth before she sailed, and Federal officials went on board and seized the lot. And those are the kind of rats who hate Franklin D. Roosevelt, people who cared no more about their country than rats for a sinking ship. And do they hate him? It's a frenzied hatred. But, my god, John, he's a big enough man to take all the hatred that's coming to him, and then some."

"Perhaps the whole world will soon be in as bad a jam as the United States were in. Is he a big enough man to do as much for the world?" John asked.

"Why, John, I don't think I know enough about the world to answer that question, but I'll say this. If this world does get into such a jam and Roosevelt can't pull it out, nobody else can."

"Well, for what my opinion's worth, Arthur, I agree with you."

"You've got some sense, John. You always did have," Arthur declared enthusiastically.

"I don't think my opinion about your new President has anything to do with sense. I read his Inauguration speech when Aunt Elise was staying with me at Tigh nan Ròn, and I got the same kind of kick out of it as from some historic utterance in Thucydides, and immediately afterwards I read about Hitler's accession to full power next day, and I felt I was suddenly gazing into the future and seeing good and evil facing one another."

"I don't know much about this guy Hitler," said Arthur. "The Jews in New York got a bit peeved with him the other day."

"That's one of the worrying feature of the mundane situation," John said. "America knows nothing about Hitler and Europe knows nothing about Roosevelt. They're rather hurt with him at present in high financial circles for throwing a grenade charged with something more than hot air into the geological museum where the world's Economic Conference was being held and blowing up some fossilized opinions."

"It's interesting that, what you said about Roosevelt standing for good. That's what Grandma thinks. She's a tough old Yankee, as you know, even though she did spend most of her married life in Atlanta, and she said she couldn't argue about whether the President

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was right or wrong over money, but she knew one thing and that was he was a good man, and if I was puzzled why so many folks hated him that was quite enough to explain why."

"I think your grandmother is right. I think it provides an ample explanation. By the way, I was amused when I asked David about Roosevelt."

"What did he think about him?" Arthur enquired, rather contemptuously.

"He thought he had no chance of being elected President because he was just a stuffed shirt and a crank."

Arthur snorted.

"If you want to get moron opinion at its lowest you'll get it in Hollywood. There, and on the stage," he added scornfully.

"Yes, I wonder why the political opinions of the stage are always so curiously ready-made. I suppose it's being dependent for favour on *l'homme moyen sensuel*, and an eternal effort to please gallery, pit, and stalls simultaneously."

"I think the stage is a darned awful profession," Arthur declared emphatically.

John laughed and offered his stepson another cigar.

"Try one of these," said Arthur, producing his own case. "I think you'll find them rather good."

John took a Ramon Allones, lighted it, and nodded.

"It is capital. Well, your grandmother has done a great deal for you, Arthur, but not the least of your debts to her is the ability to recognize a good cigar before you've reached your mid-twenties. So you think the stage is a poor profession?"

"Ghastly," the young man declared.

"What an epilogue! Have you let your fancy linger over any other girl?"

Arthur shook his head.

"Sufficient for the day," he observed with gravity.

"That sounds as if your next courtship was to be a lightning affair, and if an equally hasty marriage follows . . . however, as you pertinently observed, sufficient for the day. Have some more brandy."

"No, thanks. I've done myself marvellously. You do think this Paris scheme of mine is a sound one?"

"If you pull off a junior partnership it should be very sound."

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And I like to think of you so close at hand."

"Corinna's come on a lot since I saw her last," said Arthur.

"She's come on four years."

"I know. It's fantastic the way time goes by. She's mad on this flying, isn't she? What do you think she said when we got to the top of the Eiffel Tower this afternoon? 'It's not very high, is it? It was a much better view from the plane.' Some kid. You're flying back to-morrow?"

"If the weather's all right. It sounds rather gusty at present."

"I'll come along to Le Bourget and see you off."

"Oh, don't bother to do that," John said.

"I think Corinna's rather keen I should actually observe her departure," Arthur explained.

Poor Corinna herself had some appallingly anxious moments next day. It was a gusty grey morning which made John look very doubtful over the prospect.

"But, Father," she vowed in a voice tense with anxiety, "the more windy it is the better it is for flying. Oh, please don't change your mind. We can't go in the boat. It would be such a frightful come-down."

"Nothing like such a frightful come-down as it would be from the plane," John retorted.

"I think it's all right," Arthur pleaded for his sister. "There's no fog."

"And I wrote Aunt Gabrielle a very long letter—all in French—and I said at the end '*avec beaucoup beaucoup de remerciements chaleureux pour toute votre grande gentillesse pour moi. Je ne peux pas écrire plus parceque nous sommes en train de nous préparer pour notre fuite en avion à travers de la Manche. Quelle joie pour moi!*' So we can't go back by boat. Oh, please, Father."

"*Fuite!*" John laughed.

But he yielded, and when the plane rose up into a rack of Valkyrie shapes tearing past on cloudy steeds he wondered to himself why some bad fairy at his christening had endowed him with such a fatal propensity to consider other people's pleasure at the expense even of his own peace of mind.

Wild streamers of cloud. Earth below dim and broken as the bed of a deep river. The very plane seeming to dart through the vapours like a frightened fish. A disgusting sudden drop which

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brought John's heart into his mouth under the impression that it was the final drop.

"Wasn't that lovely, Father?" Corinna exhaled blissfully. "I think it must have been an air-pocket. We didn't get any air-pockets flying over."

They flew on in silence for a while, John looking at his watch every few minutes.

Suddenly Corinna clapped her hands.

"We're in a rainbow," she cried in ecstasy. "Look!" And looking, John saw that the wing's edge was indeed iridescent and that in front of them was a huge livid cloud.

"It's moving along with us. I never knew that rainbows moved. So that's why you can't find the end of a rainbow," she proclaimed as Archimedes may have cried 'Eureka!'

Then the plane climbed until below them stretched an immense field of white flocculent cloud in the sunlight.

"I don't think Heaven can be any more beautiful, do you?" Corinna asked in a voice of awe.

"I only hope Heaven's a little less monotonous," John said after half an hour of flying over this flocculence. "Still, I suppose it's appropriate that your heavenly analogue should resemble an infinite sheep."

"I don't understand what you're saying," Corinna said.

"Never mind. You weren't really intended to. I wonder how they're going to find Croydon in this woolly desert of cloud."

"By wireless, of course," she told him.

"I'm truly grateful to Marconi for the first time," John declared.

Soon after this the plane was circling the aerodrome at Croydon. Spreading green. Tarmac neatness. Concrete efficiency. Tabs and tickets and passports all in order. Another long drive through villadom. The trees of Park Lane coming to a standstill.

"Air France," John said, when the motor-coach stopped beside that neon sign. "It's very good air, isn't it?"

"Air France," Corinna murmured to herself in a pensive rapture of memories, not alas! of Paris and Pierrefonds, not of Chartres and Reims and Orléans, not of Ar Zour beside its lily-pool, not of Larnay-Mozère in the warm heart of the Lyonnais, nor even of the rapid blue Rhône and the slow green Saône flowing side by

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side which had enchanted her so short a while ago, but of the air between Croydon and Le Bourget, between Le Bourget and Croydon.

John and Corinna arrived at 57 Church Row in time for him to take part in a discussion about the future of the house.

"I'm all for selling," David declared. "It's too big a house for Mother by herself. "And I'll probably have to go back to the States early next year."

"Has the attempt to put British films on the map collapsed already?" John asked.

"My dear old stick-in-the-mud, there is such a thing as cooperation. What we're out to do is to work in with the Yanks, not put them out of business in this country. If they'll give British films a fair deal we'll give them a fair deal," David said. "And I think they're going to do this Beethoven film on the other side."

John laughed.

"I'm sorry, David, but I can't help it."

"Well, you were so very superior about it."

"It's no use. You won't convince me that if I had agreed to write the script it would have made any difference to when the film was produced," John said. "And I'm not laughing with any malice, David. I am laughing because there is not a single member of our National Government who has the faintest conception that if we intend to bilk the Americans over our war debt we shall want all the help we can from our films to persuade the world that we are not going down-hill."

"But this argument isn't helping to settle the problem of 57 Church Row," Elise put in. "Suppose you got married, David? Wouldn't you like to feel you had such a delightful house to live in?"

"It's too big, Mother. *If* I got married, of which I see no prospect at the moment, I'd prefer a flat in town, and a little place somewhere fairly near the big studios."

John sighed deeply.

"Why this lament?" David asked.

"I was sighing for the faintest breath of eccentricity. I'm not inviting you to button the bottom button of your waistcoat

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or turn down your trousers, but . . . never mind, the point is you don't want to feel in the least dependent on this delightful house."

"I think it's too big," David insisted. "Surely it is too big for you, Mother?"

"It will be so nice for Prudence when she brings the children to London, and it's nice for John when he has Corinna with him," Elise pointed out. "And there's the question of the furniture. If I go into a smaller house that will mean storing a lot of it. And your father's library . . ."

"You must let your mother know what she wants for herself, David. After all, there's no financial urgency to sell the house," John pointed out.

"None whatever," Elise agreed.

"All right, all right," said David. "It's your house, and if you want to live in a quantity of unused rooms, that's your concern. Only I think you'll find it too big."

So it was decided that Lady Ogilvie would remain at 57 Church Row, Hampstead.

At the same time another discussion about future domicile was going on in East Heath Road. News had come that old Mr Blakiston had died suddenly, and Julius and Leonora were sailing almost at once. The school Monica was attending was proving a success. Miss Welldon, the governess in charge of Veronica and Wolfgang, was an equal success, and Sebastian was going up to King's in October.

"Whether we'll ever persuade my mother to come and live in England I doubt," Leonora told John, "but Julius has set his heart on buying the lease of this house, and the people who have it are anxious to sell. That will mean furnishing, and we'll get back as soon as we can in the New Year. Miriam has agreed to shut up her house and take charge here, which is terribly sweet of her. I don't want to disturb the children."

"You think Julius will stay in Europe?" John asked.

"Yes, his heart is set on it, John. He has a feeling that there will soon be some vital struggle—for the soul of man, he says. He wants to be here."

"And you won't regret America?" he asked.

"No, I won't regret it, John. Anyway, my father hadn't been

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able to keep Julius's orchestra going, and he's been approached with a view to his taking over the conductorship of the Birfield Municipal Orchestra next year."

"Would that mean living in Birfield?"

"Not all the time. He could do it quite easily from London."

"And what about Sebastian?" asked John. "Will he like leaving America?"

"We're going to see what he makes of Cambridge. Julius's idea is to let him decide for himself. He'll be nineteen in February."

"I should welcome him on the island for the Christmas vacation," John suggested. "And couldn't he bring Monica with him? Padraig Fitzgerald is to have the felicity of winter sporting with his Swiss friend. I haven't had a chance to see enough of Sebastian since he came to this country."

"Why, I think that's a lovely plan, John."

Julius and Leonora left for the States, and on the same evening John went round to see Miriam Stern at Belmore House, a deep, double bow-fronted Regency house standing back from a small garden full of Michaelmas daisies, the flat roof of which overlooked London.

"Uprooted at last, John. Thus do I celebrate the allotted span," she said with a smile.

"Your seventieth birthday!" he exclaimed. "I'll have to confess I'd completely forgotten. How glad I am I came round. I'll be fifty-one myself in three weeks, which no doubt encourages me to forget these autumnal dates. But it's worth being uprooted, isn't it, to keep the children here as a guarantee that Julius and Leonora will come back."

"Indeed, yes. Pull your chair in to the fire, John. I think there's a touch of frost in the air. Or is it old age which makes this blaze so comforting?"

"Not at all. It is a very cold evening," he insisted. "Miriam, I want to consult you about a piano. I want to get one in time for Sebastian's visit. Would he disdain a baby-grand? I don't think I can manage anything so possessive as that great Steinway of yours."

"Of course he won't disdain a baby-grand."

"Well, would he go and pick one out, do you think?"

"I'm sure he would, John. He's gone to the promenade concert at Queen's Hall. I think there's a first performance of a piano

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concerto by some English composer. Emil and Astrid will be here presently."

"That's capital. I haven't seen Emil since I got back from France. I've just been reading Astrid's new novel. So good, and yet with all its anxious accomplishment so . . . so much ado about nothing. It's curious the way these highbrow novelists despise the art of concealing art. They have a horror of letting anybody suppose for one moment that writing might be easy. Like Fielding's Partridge who admired acting which anybody could see was acting. Not for him Garrick who didn't seem to be acting at all. And it was always the same. Anybody could see Ben Jonson was writing: they weren't so sure about Shakespeare. Anybody could see Meredith was writing: they weren't so sure about Hardy. And the amusing thing is that the highbrow of the next generation so often rejects his highbrow predecessor's admired darling and becomes the patron of the popular writer whose contemporaries couldn't see he was writing. Trollope is an instance of that. Where is Meredith now? Where indeed already is Conrad? Where is the rage *d'antan*? And those Meredithkins of to-day whose art is so elongated and whose life is so abbreviated? But the novelists are not so carnivorous as the poets. The Neo-Georgians of the 'teens fattened their emotions on the war only to be devoured by their successors of the 'twenties who fattened theirs on the peace. Now they are being gobbled up by another group fattened on communism, though fattened is hardly the word for such lean rhymers. And I've no doubt that in the next decade they will be gobbled up by their juniors fattened on another war or the prospect of it."

"Meanwhile, John, we always have Jane Austen," Miriam Stern reminded him.

"Thank heaven we have," he said. "But even she is not immune from the coterie's necrophily. I read of people who call themselves Janeites. And that coy doggerel of Kipling's celebrating her reception in some literary gent's paradise. I don't suppose Kipling himself would have called her 'little woman', but most of his characters would."

"I don't think you can accuse poor Astrid of being a Janeite," Miriam laughed.

;"She would be," John replied, "she would be if they could make the sect exclusive enough."

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"Well, you're not to start arguing with her to-night, John."

"I never argue with her, and I do my best to prevent her trying to argue with me," he affirmed.

Just then the bell rang, and Miriam went out to welcome her elder son and her daughter-in-law.

"John! This is an unexpected pleasure," Astrid exclaimed. "So you are back from France, and did you have a jolly time?"

"When are these French politicians going to stop quarrelling among themselves?" Emil asked. "They'll have to look out, you know, or they'll find their country in a pretty bad mess. However, I fancy Blum will get into power fairly soon, and he may pull things together. The sooner the country realizes that it must give an intelligent lead to the democratic forces of the West and bring the Soviets into an active participation in European affairs the better the chance of dealing with this Fascist menace."

"I think the best way of dealing with the Fascist menace," said John, "by which I suppose you mean the Nazis, is to march into Germany immediately."

"No, no, John," Astrid expostulated. "The way to deal with the Nazis is to demonstrate to the people of Germany our completely pacific intentions. We must support disarmament. Even in Sweden there was for a while quite a lot of approval of the new German régime, but as soon as the people of Sweden saw what a threat it was to democracy all are now united in support of our Government. We attach very great importance to maintaining the authority of the League of Nations. I am quite sure the German people will soon assert their democracy again."

"Again?" John echoed. "When have they ever asserted it?"

"They asserted it in 1918," Emil insisted. "And if our incompetent Government had known how to foster the Weimar Republic by sympathetic treatment we should never have heard of Hitler. He would still be on a soap-box."

"Well, what might have happened doesn't really come into the argument about what's to be done now," John said. "Fifteen years have passed, and whether they were misused or not doesn't alter the present state of the German mind. By all means be sympathetic after the Nazis have been crushed, but crush them first, and crush them quickly. The German people have never been devoted to lost causes."

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"My dear John, if you were a communist," Emil said, "you would know that the people who run this country are far more afraid of communism than they are of fascism. Even if it were desirable, there is no chance of any strong move being made here against the Nazis. In point of fact I don't think that at the moment it is desirable, because without doubt such a move once started would probably not stop until it had enlarged itself into an attack on the Soviets. The re-establishment of democracy in Germany would be an excuse to protect it against Russian democracy."

"Also," Miriam Stern put in, "I don't think anything we say here will put a brake upon events. I'm afraid the whole world is out of hand. John has been reading your book, Astrid, and enjoying it."

"Ah, you enjoyed my book?" Astrid asked, with obvious gratification.

"Very much, though like so many novelists of the moment I think you are sometimes apt to make the works more important than the watch. Oh, I know the watch wouldn't go without them, but we don't want to see them all the time. At least, I don't."

"I think that's a just criticism," Emil observed.

"I'm afraid I don't understand it," said Astrid. "A watch tells us the time, but surely we want to know how it can tell us the time."

"Yes," said John, "so long as our preoccupation with the works doesn't end by preventing the watch from telling the time."

"You mean my book did not succeed in presenting its theme?" Astrid asked.

"Oh, yes, it succeeded," John replied, "but, I thought, with an unnecessary amount of psychological elaboration. I fancy your theme was really a much simpler one than you thought it was. It seems to me that Freud, Jung, and the rest of them are apt to provide dangerous short cuts to the main-road of life for the writer of novels or plays."

"But surely a short cut is valuable, John?" put in Miriam, who had noticed the rose of indignation budding on Astrid's cheeks and was anxious to give her daughter-in-law the impression that it was a general discussion and not a personal attack. She was so anxious that the gulf between John and Emil should not be widened.

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"Short cuts are proverbially treacherous," John argued. "What I feel about this reliance on psycho-analysis is that the dogmas have been accepted too easily and that the novelist hitches his story to the dogma instead of elucidating his story by his willingness to probe the dogma. It is the old trick of putting the cart before the horse. Pre-Freudian novelists obtained their material by a first-hand observation of life. If they were introverts (I borrow a valuable word from psycho-analysis) like the Brontës, they were still under the spell of what they believed to be life, and as far as I can make out unaware that it was life seen through the medium of a peculiarly individual temperament."

"But may I not claim as much for my novels?" Astrid asked.

"Certainly," John admitted. "And therefore I don't understand why you handicap yourself by squeezing your characters into somebody else's moulds. Let's take a commonplace instance from the past. Shakespeare knew nothing about psycho-analysis when he wrote *Hamlet*. He created the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude either from an extroverted observation of it in life or from an introverted recognition of it in himself. Suppose he had been in a position to study beforehand in a text-book the theory of that relationship illustrated by suitable cases, A—— B—— aged twenty-seven, and the rest of them? Mightn't he in his anxiety to fit his characters to a psycho-analytical dogma have deprived them of life in the process? Might not the short cut have proved an illusion and the main road never have been reached?"

"But . . ." Astrid began.

"No, let me finish," John interrupted. "Now, I'm not suggesting you would bother to exploit a dogma so ordinary as the Oedipus-complex or the Electra-complex. The result is that you are running the risk in all your books of exploiting psychological rareties of character all off the main road of life, and which being inspired by theoretical knowledge instead of practical experience are squeezed out of recognizable human shape by the mould into which they have been forced."

"Surely the discovery of the unconscious has compelled novelists and dramatists to reconcile their approach to life?" Emil asked. "The time has passed for the one-dimensional characters which satisfied the pre-Freudian novelist and dramatist."

"I think we're apt to exaggerate this one-dimensional aspect,"

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John replied. "They were often one-dimensional because the readers and the audience lacked enough knowledge of life to endow them with anything more. There must be reciprocity in a work of art. Dramatists had to use the device of the soliloquy and the aside to help their audiences to see behind the outward presentation. Novelists were driven into psychological exposition of the motives behind the actions and words of their characters to explain them to their readers. A great deal of Freudianism is merely expressing in text-book jargon what novelists and dramatists have for centuries expressed by character without being hampered by dogmas about the unconscious. You can't call Jane Austen's characters one-dimensional, and the fact that Charlotte Brontë thought she lacked depth of emotion is an illustration of Charlotte Brontë's inability to look at life except through her own introverted glasses. She can understand Jane Eyre, but Jane Fairfax is merely a figure in a corner unworthy of the attention of so tempestuous an egotist as Charlotte Brontë."

"But might I not claim," Astrid asked with a touch of acidity, "that the subtle and fine-spun interplay of motive in one of my novels is unworthy of the attention of so tempestuous an extrovert as yourself, John?"

"Oh, I'm perfectly willing to admit my own temperamental prejudices," he replied. "Call them deficiencies if you like. And if you highbrow writers of the moment can discover the art of concealing your art I'll be willing to accord you all the admiration you could want. Meanwhile, I'm apt to be put off by seeing too much of the works, too little of the watch."

"But if the watch goes?" Emil asked. "Surely that is all that matters finally. We've had too many watches to look at which never went at all, watches that never showed their works because there were no works to show. Personally I think the novel is a low aesthetic form with not much more relation to the higher manifestations of the human mind than keeping an aquarium for amusement bears to biology. But if people want to keep aquariums I shall be more interested by a tank of unusual marine life than a globe of goldfishes or a jar of minnows."

"You think the novel so low as that, Emil?" his wife exclaimed in dismay. "Then why have you encouraged me to go on writing novels?"

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"Because your novels have a great deal of intellectual content," he replied. "And because I consider that women can add something to the novel. They have not been long enough partially emancipated to reach the summits of the major arts."

"In other words," said John, unable to resist the opportunity Astrid's husband had given him, "not sufficiently developed."

"You cannot really believe that women are less highly developed than men," Astrid demanded in wrathful incredulity.

"I certainly do as far as their creative ability outside the functions of the womb is implied," John declared. "Nor do I see anything derogatory to womanhood in such a belief. It is only another way of saying that they are the guardians of mankind's evolutionary destiny. And I will hazard this opinion: if creative art has any future among the human race it lies in the hands of women. Creative art among men is slowly becoming more and more purely cerebral, less and less uterine—if I may be allowed to provide the creative artist with a womb—and that must mean its gradual extinction. Great painting, great sculpture, and great poetry are already moribund and I am inclined to suppose they may be dead. What passes for great painting and sculpture now is a purely cerebral process which consciously seeks to revive its creative force by a deliberate attempt to recapture the creative impulse of primitive man to decorate his cave or present the external feature of his gods. And it can't be done. It cannot be done any more successfully than love can be revived by aphrodisiacs. A thousand Picassos or Van Goghs are no substitute for a Velasquez or a Rembrandt. A thousand Epsteins and Mestrovics cannot give us the equivalent of the Demeter of Cnidos. As for great poetry it seems to have died with Shelley in England, in Italy with Leopardi. Baudelaire half killed it in France, Rimbaud finished it off, and Mallarmé buried it. Oh yes, there is plenty of cerebration. It pullulates. Cerebration cannot provide the word with life. It cannot respond to the Greek demand by the name they gave to poetry that it should make or create. If man were as sterile physically as he is imaginatively every child would be stillborn. Contemporary poetry is stillborn at its best, at its worst it is an abortion. Poetry is made by youth. If the young man has not produced some great poetry before he is twenty-four he will never produce it. Why then should a nation or a race or a culture or a civilization which has outlived its youth be able to

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produce great poetry? The poetry of our young men to-day is senescent. It is afraid of metre as an old man is afraid of dancing. I do not consider that to shuffle round the floor of a night-club clinging to a young woman is dancing. An old broom wielded by a housemaid might as well claim that it was spontaneously sweeping. I still hope that the greatest music has not yet been written, and I believe that such music may be written by men, when painting, sculpture, and poetry have passed to women. When women write great music we may expect the end of humanity on this earth. So don't be annoyed with me, Astrid, for suggesting that women are not yet developed as much as men. It would indeed be a poor look-out for humanity if they were."

"I think there *may* be something in what you say, John," Emil allowed. "I suppose the unpleasant extension of your theory is that in due course the human race will be unable to appreciate its own earlier artistic achievements?"

"There are signs of that already," John replied. "What proportion of the people of modern Italy appreciate the *Divina Commedia*? What proportion of the people of England appreciate the *Canterbury Tales*? And the trouble is that education, after being intolerably dilatory, is now trying to make up for it by being too hasty. There are no short cuts to taste. I deny that anybody can appreciate Keats's *Ode to Autumn* who has not at some time in his life been moved by Longfellow's *Psalm of Life* or Macaulay's *Lays*. Our educationalists are too much afraid of bad taste. They, too, are over-partial to short cuts."

"You surely wouldn't encourage children to have bad taste?" Astrid asked in dismay.

"I shouldn't discourage them," John responded. "Positive taste of any kind is a sign of vitality, and I should be grateful enough for any signs of genuine vitality. After all, good taste must depend finally on experience. The child enjoys equally *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Swiss Family Robinson*. How is anything except experience going to teach it that one is a great work of art, the other an enchanting absurdity?"

"*The Swiss Family Robinson*?" Astrid repeated in a puzzled voice. "I do not know that book. It is good?"

"It's ridiculous," Emil declared.

"No, no, Emil," his mother put in, "not in that way, though I

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suppose it's beneath the attention of our well-informed children of to-day."

"And did you say that *Robinson Crusoe* was a great work of art, John?" Astrid asked in bewilderment.

"I did."

She took out her vanity-case and powdered her nose rather with the air of administering an antiseptic to her wounded mind.

"But we went to see it, John, and it was the most nonsensical play I have ever seen."

"Astrid, my dear, that was the pantomime which the Malcolms insisted on dragging us to see," her husband reminded her quickly. "John's talking of Defoe's book."

"Ah, that I have not read," she said. "But if it is at all like that very very stupid play I don't think I should like it at all."

"Who are the Malcolms?" John asked.

"Richard Malcolm is the editor of *New Wine*."

"I hadn't realized till now that he was a human being," John laughed.

"He is certainly the most brilliant of the younger critics," Astrid asserted firmly.

"But that wouldn't enable me to assume that he was a human being," John said gravely. "Did Yan and Erika enjoy the pantomime?"

"Not at all," Astrid replied. "But they do not care a great deal for the theatre. They like some of the films very much. They have some splendid films from Russia at their new school."

"Is the school a success?" John enquired.

"Don't be lured into telling him, Astrid," her mother-in-law advised when she shrugged her neat shoulders. "He will only laugh."

"It is so very easy to laugh," Astrid said disdainfully.

"*Rire est le propre de l'homme*," John quoted. "And Rabelais was wise."

"One of the things that puzzles me, John," Emil said, "is how you and Julius who pride yourselves so much on laughter do not laugh at Catholicism."

Miriam Stern's lips tightened nervously as she threw an appealing glance at John.

"I will give you a great thought, Emil, for this evening," he said.

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"Have you noticed that so far as England is concerned Catholics have almost the monopoly of humorists?"

"Which indicates perhaps shallowness," Astrid sniffed.

"Or that the water beneath them is so deep," suggested John, "that they can afford to gambol on the surface. But don't let's get on to the subject of religion. I will not mock at Freud and you shall leave the Pope to reflect upon his own absurdity."

"I have a drum of Hymettus honey from Fortnum's," said Miriam Stern. "Let's have it with cups of China tea as my birthday treat."

"Hymettus honey," John murmured.

He was not thinking of Athens, but of that afternoon almost thirty-four years ago when Emil had invited him to tea for the first time in Claremount Gardens and they had Hymettus honey for tea. Fifteen Emil was then, appearing more Hellenic than Semitic with his heavy-lidded large lustrous eyes and scarlet upcurving bow of a mouth, with his skin translucent-seeming as fragile porcelain and his hands white and light and trim as feathers. A sudden pang cut through him as he saw with the mind's eye that Emil of long ago and thought of what all that intimacy had meant to both of them once.

He turned impulsively to Astrid.

"You don't know how much of my ability to say anything of what I have been saying to-night was due to the endless talks that Emil and I used to have when we were young. You can't imagine, Astrid, how much I owe to that rather severe husband of yours in the days when he looked like a Florentine page in a quattrocento painting."

Miriam Stern looked up at John with a warmth of affectionate gratitude.

"You mustn't think I laugh too easily at everything, Astrid," he continued.

Emil was frowning as if he disapproved of this display of sentiment; but when his mother asked him to ring the bell he rested his hand upon her shoulder for a moment before he sat down again.

Just then Sebastian came in from the concert, and when asked what the new concerto was like, grunted as his father used to grunt in answer to such questions and sat by himself in a corner.

"It was modern?" Astrid asked hopefully.

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"It was trying to be," Sebastian replied.

"Is that piano all right?" John asked, looking across to a Broadway semi-grand which was part of the furniture of Belmore House.

"It's not bad," Sebastian replied.

"I was wondering if you'd play me something."

Sebastian frowned so like his father.

"I didn't mean just anything," John amplified. "I was wondering if you'd play me some of Schumann's *Kinderszenen*."

Sebastian grinned and seated himself at the piano.

"Do you remember when you played *Träumerei*, Miriam?" he asked, "and Julius played it over again on the violin, and—I was almost in tears?"

"John, I remember so much, so very much on this seventieth birthday of mine," she said.

It was the morning after Corinna's thirteenth birthday, a fine still January day which was being devoted by Monica and herself to some lobster-gathering expedition with old Aulay Macaulay in the *Flora*. Sebastian at the Blüthner baby-grand which had been installed in John's library had just swung round on his stool after playing for about ten minutes.

"What was that, Sebastian?" John asked.

"A Beethoven sonata."

"Yes, but which? I don't remember it."

"Op. 54 in F major. It comes between the *Waldstein* and the *Appassionata* and gets forgotten in consequence," Sebastian drawled.

"I think it's a pity all the sonatas are not named," John observed. "There's another lovely one in F major, but I haven't a notion of the Opus number."

Sebastian swung round to the piano.

"You mean the second in Opus 10, the second of the set of three dedicated to the Countess von Browne," and he played the sonata through.

"Yes, I know that one. It's charming, but it's not the one I mean."

"You may think you know it because of the Brahms Scherzo in E flat minor. Brahms bagged the Trio from it for that. And the

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queer thing is that Liszt hailed him as a revolutionary composer on the strength of it. Schumann was pretty impressed too. Brahms knew what he was about all right. He must have written it before he was as old as I am now."

"I don't think I remember that Scherzo."

"Oh yes, you do, Uncle John. It goes like this."

And Sebastian played through that Scherzo in E flat minor which eighty years earlier the uncouth young Brahms had played to the kind and courtly Liszt.

"Yes, I do remember it now," John said. "But I'm sure it's not the F major sonata I'm thinking of."

"There isn't another sonata in F major. It was the key Beethoven always used to express happiness," Sebastian went on. "The Pastoral Symphony and the Eighth Symphony. The First String Quartet, and the First Rasoumowsky, and the last Quartet of all. And the so-called Spring Sonata."

"Why so-called?"

"Because it was a name given to it by the publisher."

"I wonder," John said reflectively, "if I should have remembered so well the occasion on which I first heard the Spring Sonata if it had just been called Sonata for Violin and Pianoforte in F."

"When did you first hear it?"

"On an oppressive August night in Fontainebleau nearly thirty-four years ago. Your father and your grandmother played it. Your father chose it to play with a French girl whose name I forget at the first concert he gave after his long illness while he was still a boy. It was at the Bechstein Hall in the autumn of 1900."

Sebastian left the piano-stool and flung himself down in one of John's deep chairs.

"And I remember," John went on, "that your father was to play the Kreutzer Sonata also. How did the Kreutzer get its name?"

"Op. 47 in A was dedicated to Rudolph Kreutzer."

"Who was he?"

"I don't remember. It was the music which made his name, not his name the music, though I suppose that idiotic story of Tolstoy's helped to popularize the sonata."

"But Tolstoy wouldn't have helped much if his novel had been called Op. 47 in A," John suggested.

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"I wonder if the Sonata in F you were thinking of was the Sonata in F sharp," Sebastian exclaimed suddenly.

He went back to the piano and struck those four wistful bars marked *adagio cantabile* which ask the question that the rest of that magical sonata answers with such a melodious rapture of happiness.

"That's the one! I thought it was F, not F sharp," John said. "If I'd told you it was dedicated to Theresa von Brunswick would you have remembered which one it was?"

"Sure I would, because it was Beethoven's own favourite sonata. He used to get pretty peeved with people who thought the C sharp minor a better work."

"Which is that?"

"The so-called Moonlight."

"Yes, of course," John exclaimed. "What's the objection to its being called the Moonlight?"

"Well, it was never called the Moonlight by Beethoven himself. What's it got to do with moonlight anyway? Some bum critic wrote that it reminded him of moonlight on the water, and it has been Moonlight ever since."

"Critics don't often achieve such recognition."

"A good job they don't," Sebastian growled.

"Still, it was quite a harmless title," John insisted. "And if it hadn't reminded thousands of other listeners of moonlight the title wouldn't have lasted. Moreover, even if Beethoven himself didn't regard the C sharp minor as his best sonata, nobody could call it unworthy of him, and how many many people have been led to Beethoven along that moonlit path of black and white notes! The Moonlight Sonata and the Fifth Symphony, those have been the gates by which the majority of people have entered the world of the greatest composer of all—the only composer, I think, who stands on a level with Dante, Shakespeare, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and the mighty Greeks."

"He sure was the greatest of them all," Sebastian murmured dreamily.

"And I can't help wishing some critic had thought of an equally attractive title for the sonata in F sharp."

"Op. 78 in F sharp," said Sebastian.

"It is discouraging to the lay mind," John said with a smile.

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"Perhaps with motor-buses numerals may acquire romantic associations. And certainly in support of your side in the argument a lot of the romance was knocked out of the Line regiments when they took away their numbers and substituted geography. The 27th of the Line says more somehow than the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, and the Dirty Half Hundred how much more than the West Kent, or was it the Middlesex Regiment? There's an example of the territorial name's failure to register. Still, it's not the same with works of music, because, after all, the numbers are shared by many composers and Beethoven's Op. 78 may be very different from Tchaikowsky's. I'd like to call Op. 78 in F sharp major the Brunswick Sonata, or why not the Theresa Sonata?"

The next day John returned to this topic.

"I've been reading up about those two sonatas," he told Sebastian. "I find that the Moonlight was dedicated to Countess Giulietta Guicciardi who was apparently a minx, and yet I wonder if she was quite such a minx as Beethoven's biographers are all determined to make her just because they want him to be a kind of chained Titan. One of them says that the gloom of the Funeral March Sonata, Op. 26 in A flat, puts into music the effect on his spirits of Giulietta's flirtatiousness and another says that the second sonata of Opus 31 in D minor is like a great heart-broken monologue. Do play me those two sonatas."

"They're both marvellous," John declared when Sebastian had finished, "particularly, I think, the second one; but neither suggests to me the despair of a broken heart."

"As a matter of fact," Sebastian said, "I believe the funeral march was written to show he could write a better funeral march than some guy who'd had a big success with one in an opera then running in Vienna."

"And now play me the companion of the Moonlight," John asked.

Sebastian looked round before he started.

"This first of the two in Op. 27 is in E flat, and Beethoven calls it '*quasi una fantasia*'. I don't know why. I think most of his sonatas are pretty nearly fantasias."

"How odd!" John exclaimed when Sebastian took his hands off the keyboard.

"What is?"

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"Why, a bit of it is just like that ridiculous song *Cheer, Boys, Cheer.*"

"I never heard that song."

"It was popular in the 'eighties. There was a melodrama called *Cheer, Boys, Cheer*, and I remember the song's being sung by the kind comic woman just before the hero and his friend were ordered abroad on active service to Matabeleland or the North-West Frontier or somewhere." John hummed the three notes.

"That phrase reminds me of Chopin's *Fantasia in F*," Sebastian told him.

"It's a delightful sonata, and I think it ought to have a name," John said. "Why couldn't it be called the *Fantasy*? As it is it's never heard of because it's coupled with the *Moonlight* and always in the shadow. By the way, Giulietta rather takes the wind out of the sails of the biographers over the *Moonlight*. She says Beethoven dedicated the *Rondo in G* to her and then took it away from her because he wanted to find something to dedicate to Princess Lichnowsky and gave her the *C sharp minor sonata* instead. I must say I rather doubt if Giulietta was nearly as much responsible for Beethoven's moods of depression as the consciousness of his own steadily growing deafness. But thanks to the *Moonlight* everybody remembers the Guicciardi romance and how noble Beethoven was when she married Count Gallenberg. I'll bet David and your father have made that the central incident of their film."

"They have," Sebastian said.

"Well, I would have chosen *Theresa von Brunswick*," John declared. "I'd have shown her coming to him first as a schoolgirl to have music lessons and falling in love with him and his being more interested in her sister Josephine, and I'd have used Giulietta Guicciardi, her cousin, as another discouraging episode, and then I'd have shown Beethoven going to stay with the Brunswicks in Hungary and getting engaged to Theresa with the approval of her brother Franz. It would make a wonderful scene that Sunday evening in Martonvásár when Beethoven sat playing in the moonlight and Theresa's mother and the priest fell asleep and her brother Franz was dreaming in a corner, and Beethoven struck some deep chords in the bass and began to sing Bach's song *Willst du dein Hertz mir schenken?*—Wilt thou give me thy heart? And then Beethoven becoming a bit of a dandy for a while, and suddenly putting aside

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the Fifth Symphony and in his brief happiness writing the Fourth in record time. That lovely Fourth which is usually so badly conducted. And then the writing of the Appassionata and dedicating it to Franz von Brunswick, '*Liebe, liebe Braunschweig,*' he wrote, '*küsse deine Schwester Therese.*' That was in May 1806 when they were engaged with Franz's approval. The Appassionata was the publisher's name for it. Do you object to that?"

"Well, he did write another sonata in F minor—the first of the thirty-two."

Sebastian swung round on the stool and played it through.

"That brings back hearing you play Mozart sonatas when you were tiny," John told him. "You used to be very severe on my inability to detect that a note was slightly out of tune. By the way, is the Blüthner all right?"

"One or two of the notes are slightly, very slightly out, but it's almost impossible to keep a piano absolutely in perfect tune beside the sea, Uncle John. It just can't be done, and it's a bit of an undertaking getting a tuner all the way out here, isn't it?"

"It is rather a business. But what about the Appassionata as a title? Do you object to it?"

"Well, one kind of gets used to it, and it's such a darned great piece of music that the stupidest title wouldn't harm it."

"Beethoven himself said the clue to its meaning was Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and I think people have fancied too readily he meant the storm. I think the clue was the relationship of Prospero to Miranda," John suggested. "And I'd like to bring that out in a film."

"You've got some hope of a movie audience," Sebastian commented. "And how would you explain why Beethoven and Theresa von Brunswick never married?" he went on.

"Oh, there are plenty of reasons. It may have been difference in social position. It may have been the growing deafness. It may have been Beethoven's pride. Or it may have been the syphilis, if that is accepted as a fact. Anyway they parted, but they seem to have continued to love one another all their lives, and Theresa lived on till 1861—an old, old woman. Not long before Beethoven died a friend came in and found him looking at a portrait of herself Theresa had given him twenty years earlier. It was inscribed '*to the rare genius, the great artist, the generous man*'. He

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was talking to the portrait and murmuring, 'You were so beautiful, so great, so like an angel.' The friend withdrew without disturbing him, and calling again later he found Beethoven at the piano. 'There are no black looks on your face to-day, my old friend.' And Beethoven turning round said that was because his good angel had been visiting him. I wonder if that lovely sonata *Les Adieux*—Beethoven himself called it that—was really his farewell to Theresa von Brunswick disguised as his farewell to the Archduke Rudolf. Play it to me, Sebastian."

Sebastian played it.

"*Les Adieux, l'Absence, et le Retour*," John murmured when Sebastian stopped. "You can't tell me you'd prefer that exquisite piece of music should be called Opus 81A in E flat."

"That name was given it by Beethoven himself."

"But the next sonata, which wasn't written till nearly five years later, that's Opus 90 in E. Yet Beethoven said that the first of the two movements represented a struggle between the heart and the head and the second a duologue with the beloved one. Surely that was Theresa. Two years after this he said the thought of her made his heart beat as fast as on the day they first met, and in that same year of 1816 he was composing six songs *An die ferne Geliebte*—To the loved one far away. Why shouldn't that sonata, Opus 90 in E, be called The Heart and the Head? Beethoven wouldn't have objected to that, and if it had a title like that so many would get to know it better. It may be the key to the breaking-off of that engagement. The head ruling the heart. And now, Sebastian, play me the last sonata of all."

"You're not going to find a title for that?" Sebastian asked disapprovingly.

"I'd hardly dare try to find titles for any of those centurions at the end," John admitted. "But The Last will serve for Opus 111 in C minor."

John leaned back to listen. It was a crystalline January day when the view from the windows in the library at Tigh nan Ròn opened upon a frozen world beneath the pale-blue vault of the sky. The sea was so still that the low winter sunlight did not set the watery diamonds winking, and it was reflected southward in a cold uniform dazzle. The majestic first two movements might have contended with the Minch at its fiercest, and Sebastian played what

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is really the equivalent of a Prelude and Fugue with an authority that seemed uncanny for a boy of eighteen. The listener could fancy that the sea had been tamed into this tranquillity by such majesty of music thus interpreted by human fingers. And then, played as John could never remember he had heard it played before, came the Arietta with those three sublime variations. And involuntarily he looked round as if he expected the apparition of some celestial visitor of whom this Arietta was the voice, for it seemed too magically remote to be merely the result of Sebastian's fingers touching the keyboard of a Blüthner baby-grand. The sonata came to an end with that echo on earth of an air that might have been sung above the pale-blue wintry vault of heaven.

"I can't believe you're human when you play like that," John muttered after a silence. "Sebastian, you are a great pianist. I never heard the last sonata die away in such an ecstasy of sound. I'm glad no wind disturbed us, no wave nor cry of passing sea-bird. Beethoven must have composed that last sonata in a still frost. Let me look when he wrote it"—John fetched down a book from the shelf—"yes, yes, it is dated January 13th, 1822. It must have been written in frost and should always be played on such a day as this."

"Maybe it was," Sebastian agreed.

"I dislike the thought of sentimentalizing music or introducing the pathetic fallacy," John went on, "but I cannot help being convinced that that final Arietta is the voice of Theresa von Brunswick heard as now his immortal soul hears it in eternity. I suppose that last sonata is not as difficult to play well as the huge Hammerclavier, but to play supremely well as you have just played it, it must be the most difficult of all. Well, difficult is a ridiculous word to use. It demands inspiration from the player . . . and, Sebastian, you gave it that. I think of you on another January morning twelve years ago—just exactly a century after Beethoven composed that last sonata—in Well Walk, Hampstead. You were playing on a rather stiff cottage Metzler of yellow satinwood. You were playing what I think was probably an early sonata of Mozart, and I remember reflecting that it was music such as the first snowdrops might bring with their white bells in the pale wintry sunlight. This morning, sitting here and listening to you playing, I feel as if that Arietta had echoed from those white mountains along the horizon across the

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sun-sheened water that lies between them and our island. Do not be severe with my raptures."

"From all the stories I hear about myself I must have been a pretty annoying kind of kid," Sebastian observed.

"You were rather a trial to poor Arthur."

"Yes, he told me once I was the darnedest know-all kid he ever struck. 'You ought to have kicked me around more, Arthur,' I said to him, but he reckoned it wouldn't have done any good, however hard he kicked me around. I suppose my father was pretty much the same, wasn't he? He's got that kind of a look in his eye."

"No, I don't think it would have done much good to kick your father around," John agreed. "And you really do like King's?"

"I like it pretty well so far," Sebastian replied, "though these British undergraduates make me feel a bit old. It's a queer thing about this country, Uncle John. The buildings and the places are all so darned old and the people are all so darned young."

"Do you think you'll want to stay your full time at Cambridge?"

"I can't answer that one right now. I'll give it a year anyway. Maybe then I'll go off and explore Europe for myself. Don't tell my father, but I've been playing the violin quite a lot."

John exclaimed in surprise.

"And the oboe . . ." Sebastian chuckled. "Oh boy, am I a bum performer on the oboe? I sure am! But I wanted to get to know something about other instruments. And anyway you can't carry a piano around. I guess I'll play my way into people's minds with a violin more easily than any other way. And you know, Uncle John, it isn't much good composing music unless you can reach people's minds. I think we're all apt to get too excited about our own minds nowadays. I want to get *me* into harmony with *it*, and then in finding the melody it plays for *me* hand that back to *it* in terms of *me*. I don't know if you can see at all what I'm driving at."

"I think you're stating the fundamental problem of all art—the relation of the ego to external nature which is one aspect of man's relation to God. Only the greatest creative artists have achieved that perfect balance between subjectivity and objectivity, or as we say at the moment between introversion and extroversion."

"Take Beethoven," Sebastian went on. "He had some excuse

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to get het up about himself. He was growing deafer all the time, and yet he never allowed his darned deafness to make him musically incomprehensible to other people. Yes, I know his last sonatas and his last string quartets were a hell of a puzzle to his contemporaries. They went on being a puzzle to the average so-called musical guy until the phonograph came along—gramophone you call it over here. They're no puzzle now when anybody can play them over and over until they do begin to explain themselves. You can say that Beethoven to-day is better understood by the average musical guy than he was when he was alive. I don't think that's because he was in advance of his time, as the saying goes. I think it's because his work is more easily reached nowadays. It's clear enough to me that folks are a whole lot more musical than they even thought they were and I get kind of mad with contemporary composers who haven't the creative force to feed this mighty great hunger for music."

"The same is true to a certain extent of the poets," John said. "With the growth of opportunity to make their poetry known—I'm thinking of wireless now, not cheap printing—they shrink more and more into coterie writing and mutual admiration. I don't believe you have to be roped to climb Parnassus. We want some more souls who dwell apart like stars. However, I believe the poetic impulse is moribund and that the great individual poet is unlikely to appear again among the white races. Our poets cerebrate: they do not sing. I look toward music for the expression of mankind in art. Only I wish there was more evidence of melodic fertility."

"You're right, Uncle John. You're dead right," Sebastian declared fervidly. "And it's no use for these modern composers to claim that they will be understood one day. They're more alive at this very moment than they are ever likely to be in the future, and they're not taking their chance. Would any of them be able to write that Arietta and Variations at the end of that last Sonata in C minor? Not one. Yet you couldn't have a simpler little melody. You just couldn't. Brahms could still invent melodies. Strauss invented a few. So did Mahler. So did Sibelius. Yet not one of them has invented anything like that Arietta invented at the end of a life expressed in melody. Let's face up to it, Uncle John. Isn't that lack of melodic invention what keeps my father

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from rising to the very top? You know, you just can't create a vital form out of harmonies, dissonances, and rich orchestration. A celeste and a glockenspiel, a double-bassoon and a bass-clarinete, side-drums with the snares slackened, and violins played *sul ponticello* won't compensate for lack of melodic invention. Anyway, I don't think so."

"I agree with you entirely," John said.

"And look at the time they've had since Beethoven wrote his *Missa Solennis* to produce a comparable choral work," Sebastian went on. "That was the result of the Napoleonic wars. Well, we had a pretty big war at the beginning of this century. Did it produce a *Missa Solennis*? I tell you one thing I'm going to do, Uncle John. I'm going to get hold of the sixty pages of the full score of that unfinished sixth piano concerto in D and the sketches for it in the note-books and I'm going to see if I can finish it. I wouldn't try to have a public performance—I wish Grandpa had been able to keep the orchestra going—and I wouldn't let anybody know what I'd attempted to do. I don't want to look foolish. I want to learn if I can."

"I think it's a splendid idea," John assured the boy. "I'm rather sorry you and I didn't try to make a film about Beethoven before David and your father took the job in hand."

"Well, why shouldn't we?" Sebastian asked.

John shook his head.

"No, I don't think we could do that. I think it might upset your father. He's determined you shall leave him behind in music, but I don't think he'd like that particular kind of a race. I fancy he might be hurt with me. But we'll get a musical subject. I'm not sure Berlioz mightn't provide it. What do you feel about Berlioz?"

"Why, I think he's great. I think he's terrific."

"It's a wonderful theme," John went on, "that eternal struggle all his life to win the heart of the only city in Europe he wanted to win—Paris. He had conquered Germany, Russia, England, even in a way Italy, but not France. And his life both with Harriet Smithson and the second wife whose name I forget for the moment was of great interest. And his early days when he kept himself as a chorus-singer on the Parisian stage while he composed such works as the *Symphonie Fantastique*. We have his own memories, and he

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wrote the best of all musical criticism."

"Say, that's a fine idea, Uncle John."

"And then a rather gloomy film might be made of Schumann and Clara Schumann and the young Brahms. But Berlioz will serve as a start. I'll think the whole thing out, and you shall decide whether you will do the music. The struggle between Berlioz and the academic Cherubini would be good. Don't forget Berlioz was the first man who really appreciated the grandeur and greatness of Beethoven. And now play me some more sonatas."

"Which one would you like?" Sebastian asked as he moved across to the piano.

"There's an early one dedicated to one of Beethoven's aristocratic young lady-loves with a beautiful Largo: Babette von Keglevics."

"You mean Opus 7 in E flat," Sebastian said, and started to play.

"I think that Largo in the second movement is one of the loveliest that even he ever wrote," John declared.

"You *can* have a title for this sonata. It was called the *Verliebte* at the time," Sebastian said with a grin.

"The Lovelorn Maid," John murmured. "Well, I think that ought to be officially recognized as its title."

"The next sonata, Opus 10 Number 1 in C minor, has a beautiful slow movement too."

"All these sonatas of Opus 10 were dedicated to Countess von Browne, weren't they?" said John. "Count von Browne (I wonder if he was of Irish or Scots extraction) was an officer in the Russian service and it was the Brownes who first made Beethoven interested in Russia. The Count gave him a horse."

"Well, you can call the third of these three sonatas *The Count's Horse*," Sebastian suggested, "because there's a crackerjack hunting-song in the Trio after a minuet that sounds more like a gallop than a minuet."

"The Count's Horse is certainly easier to remember than Opus 10 Number 3 in D, and so jolly a sonata is worth remembering. And now play me just one more at your own choice."

Sebastian paused for a moment, and then was away into the drumming of the Waldstein.

"Strange you should have chosen the Waldstein," John ob-

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served. "That sonata was my introduction to real music. I first heard it years ago when I was about fifteen and it made a deep impression on my unformed musical taste. Talking of that, I remember my utter bewilderment when your father as a boy played the great Bach Partita in D. My delight in the Waldstein and enjoyment of the Schumann your grandmother used to play had begun to give me a notion that I was making some musical progress. But that Partita! I felt exactly as if your father's violin was tying me up in one cat's-cradle after another each more complicated than the last. I can't pretend even to-day that I really enjoy these unaccompanied sonatas and partitas of Bach on the violin. And I don't believe that even you could give me the pleasure I ought to get from the Well-Tempered Clavier. Yes, it was strange you should choose the Waldstein out of the thirty-two. How perfectly you played the *Rondo*, and that wonderful *Coda*. I get a great deal of emotional satisfaction out of the Waldstein. I don't like it to be turned into a display of fireworks, and most players are apt to do that."

"I agree with you, Uncle John. After all, the *Appassionata* is a display of fireworks, but nobody gets away in the *Appassionata* with just putting a match to them."

"Tell me, Sebastian, are you glad your father refused to let you appear on the concert platform as a prodigy pianist? Do you think you feel better equipped or rather less handicapped as a composer in consequence?" John asked.

"I don't believe it makes any difference what you do when you're young if you really are a creative musician. If I fail to make good I certainly won't put the blame on having been kept off the concert platform, but if I'd been on the concert platform and afterwards failed to make good I don't think I'd have blamed that either."

"Of course to somebody who isn't a creative musician," said John, "the whole business is such a mystery that one can't begin to theorize about the ways and means that best suit it. You for instance probably believe yourself incapable of writing a play . . . but that doesn't make the business of writing plays incomprehensible to you. Everybody has some gift for telling stories, even if it never rises above romancing about one's own experiences. Everybody at some time or another in his life has indulged in day-dreaming,

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which is only one form of story-telling. Everybody when very young has tried his hand at drawing or painting. It's not a mystery. But music is a mystery. Incidentally, I fancy that in the case of your young cousin Yan . . ."

"Oh gee, that is a terrible kid if you like. I don't think I was as bad as that, was I?"

"You weren't encouraged to be," John replied with a laugh. "It looks as if Yan were a mathematical genius, and when you come up against mathematical genius you come up against a mystery like music. I believe music and mathematics may be even more closely related to one another than we think. But that's by the way. What I've been pondering since you've been here is how completely inadequate all my experience is to give you any advice of the slightest value. I have an instinct that your impulse to play your way into people's minds, as you put it just now, is a right one. I had a similar instinct about your father's ambition as a boy to live by himself in his own house in the heart of Poland. But I had no rational grounds. I couldn't have produced one good reason for what really was, when I look back at it, a rather dangerous experiment. You, of course, are much older than he was, even though you lack his concert-platform experience. I remember Beethoven said once that Goethe was in D major. What did he mean by that?"

"I think I understand," Sebastian replied.

"I suppose everything and everybody present themselves to you in a certain key?"

"I wouldn't go as far as that."

"Am I any key for you?" John asked.

"Why, I believe you're in C major, Uncle John. Perhaps that's why the Waldstein Sonata made such an appeal to you."

"Certainly that last quintet of Schubert's in C major says more to me than any piece of chamber music," John agreed pensively.

"And don't you like the Third Rasoumowsky Quartet?"

"Oh, indeed I do."

"The Introduzione starts right out of the key and then gradually gets into it in time for that grand Allegro of the first movement. Then the Andante with that *pizzicato* bass goes to A minor, and then the Minuet goes back into C major again. Still, I don't expect it would work out in the long run that you had a yen for

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any particular key. There's no doubt about F major being a happy key, as I told you yesterday. I don't believe anybody could be gloomy in F."

"I'd give anything to have your sense of key," John sighed. "It's like having a sixth sense. And now, if you're not too tired, just once more the Arietta and Variations from that last sonata. I want to be one of the audience at your first symphony, Sebastian, perhaps ten years hence, and remember you on this January day playing that melody woven out of snow and pale sunlight and the faint blue of the wintry sky."

The celestial melody was played, and while it was being played John could fancy that Sebastian's fingers were making patterns of sound like the white ferns of frost upon a window-pane. "Beethoven himself never heard that Arietta," John mused, "until his soul had left this earth. He knew within that unimaginable brain of his the beauty of it, but the sound never reached his mortal ears. Hark!"

The sound of children's voices was coming thinly now across the crystalline air.

"Corinna has a darned attractive voice," Sebastian remarked, sitting upright on the piano-stool and listening.

"What key is she in?" John asked.

"Oh, F major, F major every time."

And his fingers travelled lightly up and down the keyboard to play that happy scale.

It had been John's intention to take Corinna to Spain in the early spring, but when they reached London she developed scarlet fever which gave his stepmother an opportunity to turn 57 Church Row into a hospital.

"You see how right I was, John, not to take David's advice and sell the house," she declared triumphantly. "She can be completely isolated here, and you will be able to work so well in your father's library."

So John, who had a successful comedy running at the new Irving Theatre recently opened in Shaftesbury Avenue, devoted himself to the Berlioz film he had planned with Sebastian. He said nothing about it to Sebastian himself because it was considered wiser

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by mothers with children that he should run no risk of bringing infection to their houses. Julius and Leonora had returned from America and were now living at Belmore House, where Julius was busy preparing for his taking over the conductorship of the Birfield Municipal Orchestra next autumn. In any case it was better that Sebastian should give his attention, so long as he remained there, to the academic advantages of Cambridge.

Corinna's attack was not a severe one and there were no complications to cause anxiety.

"I had it much worse than you, this time sixteen years ago," John boasted to his daughter when in the second week she was already wondering why she was not allowed up. "And your short delirium was nothing like as exciting as mine. Your room was only full of birds. Mine was full of armies."

"Well, some of the birds did turn into aeroplanes," she reminded him indignantly.

"Jolly small planes," he scoffed.

"Well, your armies must have been jolly small too."

"The armies were quite big, but the men were rather small," John admitted. "Aunt Prudence was about a year older than you are now. She was at school, and hating it."

"Monica likes being at school," said Corinna.

"Do you want to go to school?" her father asked. "You can if you like. You can live here with Aunt Elise and go to Monica's school."

"But I'd rather live with you," she protested in dismay.

"Are you quite, quite sure?" John pressed.

"Yes, really, I'd much rather be with you."

He picked up his daughter's hand which was lying on the green coverlet as white and still as a lily on a pool.

"I think this autumn we'll go to Italy for the winter," he announced.

"Oh, Father, how lovely. Will we fly there?"

"No," said John firmly. "We might perhaps fly to Paris, but from Paris we shall go by train. We can't leave Mairi to bring all the luggage so far."

"Can I tell Mairi we're going to Italy? Will we go to Citrano?"

"The answer to both questions is in the affirmative. I hope

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you're sufficiently recovered from your delirium to know that means 'yes'."

"I'd know that even if I was raving," she said indignantly.

It was May before the long convalescence of scarlet fever was finished, or at least until the peeling process had left the patient fit to associate with the outside world, and John accepted a warm invitation from Ethel Pendarves to stay for a month at Pendarves House.

Henry Pendarves, who was now silvery white, had been having the excitement of the rhododendrons he had first sown at the beginning of the war coming into bloom during the last two years.

"Nothing out of the way yet, John," he grunted, "but I shall get one in due course, and if I get a real beauty I'll call it after you. I will, by G——, I will. What an awful mess is boiling up in Europe, eh? I knew this so-called National Government would make a mess of things. Hugh's doing pretty well in Bolivia in spite of this war going on with Paraguay. I see this chap Anthony Eden has just proposed that the League of Nations should lay an embargo on the export of arms to either of them. That's about all the League of Nations can deal with. Ridiculous, what? Bothering about Bolivia and Paraguay in the present state of Europe. No guts, no guts, that's the trouble. There's not a single member of this so-called National Government with the guts of Meredon Equestre."

"Of what, Henry?"

"Meredon Equestre—that blasted daffodil fly. That's got plenty of guts for a fly. But fellows in a Cabinet must have more guts than a fly. I say, these people you sold Nanhant to are not much good. You'll be disgusted when you see it. Well, I warned you not to let it fall into the hands of foreigners."

The foreigners were a Colonel on the retired list and his wife who hailed from Yorkshire. Mrs Thimbleby suffered from a weak chest and the Colonel had left his native village in the North Riding to give her an easier climate. He was a pleasant enough fellow, one of dozens of retired colonels animated by a strong sense of duty. He had also a passion for tidiness, and it was this which had upset Henry Pendarves because it had involved the clipping or eradication of so many of the sub-tropical shrubs which had flour-

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ished in the Nanphant garden. John himself was taken aback by the disappearance of the strawberry-tree whose crimson fruit used to glow like lanterns in the October dusk. Gone too was the pink ivy-leaved geranium which had formerly covered the house, roof and all.

"You've got rid of the geranium, I see," he observed to Colonel Thimbleby when with Corinna and Mairi he drove down to visit the shrine of ten happy years.

"Yes, yes. It was rather too much of a good thing," said the new owner. "It was a regular sanctuary for all sorts of insects. I like geraniums myself. But not all over a house. I've had some beds made for them in the lawn. I've enough grass for my putting-green, which is all I want. Too creaky for tennis at my age. And I never took to croquet. They tell me it's quite a tough game nowadays, but I can't get over my prejudice against it as rather too ladylike an affair. My wife's a great gardener. The herbaceous border is her strong suit. Delphiniums and that sort of thing, you know. We've got some wonderful delphiniums."

"And my glads, Charlie. Don't forget my beloved glads," said Mrs Thimbleby, a fragile beshawled woman whose very hair seemed spun grey. "And now, Mr Ogilvie, can you tell me something? Are they pronounced gládiölus or gladiölus? I never know."

"If you want to be quite correct, Mrs Thimbleby," John replied, "Gládiölus is the right pronunciation."

"Gládiölus," Mrs Thimbleby echoed in frail bewildered tones. "Oh, dear me, you have thrown a bombshell into our little garden world."

That evening John told Henry Pendarves that the Thimblebys were nothing like so bad as he had painted them.

"Foreigners! Suburban foreigners!" Henry Pendarves barked.

"But Henry, the Colonel had a distinguished career in command of one of the battalions of the Green Howards."

"Umph!" Henry Pendarves grunted. "And he thinks every green thing at Nanphant is a Green Howard. All the flowers in the place have to stand at attention. I don't know why he ever came to the Duchy. He ought to have gone to Cheltenham or Leamington. He's too suburban for Cornwall. Thank God, my daughters both married Cornishmen, and that Hugh won't bring

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some flippertigibbet from England to be mistress of Pendarves House one day."

Ethel Pendarves shook her head at John.

"Even a Devonshire woman is a foreign flippertigibbet to him," she murmured.

John smiled.

"Does your liver ever want stirring up, Henry?" he asked.

"Never. Why?"

"Because if it ever should grow sluggish I suggest a course of Houston Stewart Chamberlain's works would stir it up again," said John.

"Who's he?"

"An Englishman who fell in love with Germany and ascribed the whole glory of European civilization to the Nordic race."

"Bosh! Fiddlesticks! Tommy-rot!" the Cornishman ejaculated. "Most preposterous claim I ever heard."

"Even I was driven to fling his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* into the fire," John said. "And I was tempted to do the same with the book of another character—a German this time, called Spengler: *The Decline of the West*. Pages of dreary, turgid Teutonic balderdash, unreadable enough to earn the respect of our puritan intelligentsia of suburban atheists. Don't bother to read it."

"I certainly shan't," Henry Pendarves declared fervently.

"Henry, if I can get together one or two people on my island whom I think you would find thoroughly sympathetic, would you forsake St Pedoc for a week or two to come and stay with me?"

"Depends what time of year it is."

"Mid-winter," John suggested. "There's a Breton poet called Yves Mazy whom you really ought to meet, and there's a Highlander called Beaton in whom you would detect an affinity, and I'll have a Welshman and an Irishman to make the symposium complete."

"I can't come this winter. I might come next winter."

"All right, we'll fix the date provisionally for January 1936," John said. "It's quite far enough away to give you plenty of time to change your mind. Corinna and I were in Brittany last summer and found a church in a forest dedicated to St Pedoc. I don't think the Cornish make really enough effort to keep in close touch with

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their Breton relations. However, I'm not going to anticipate the symposium by discussing these grave matters of cultural policy now. You haven't converted your novelist son-in-law to a passionate interest in Cornish origins."

"That's Jennifer's business, and she's shirking it. Entirely taken up by this daughter of theirs."

"Henry dear," his wife protested. "It's not Jennifer who's married to Roger Vivian. It's Christabel."

To do him justice Henry Pendarves was put into some confusion by this mistake and, by the agitated thrusts of his long neck, displayed his embarrassment.

"Yes, of course, I meant Christabel. That boy of Jennifer and Tom Keigwin. . . . Tom Keigwin," he repeated defiantly, "that boy is just as stupid as ever about flowers. I don't know if you remember, John, but he couldn't tell the difference between a buttercup and a daffodil. Well, he's seven now. . . ."

"Not quite, Henry darling," his wife put in. "He'll be seven next week. He's coming to spend his birthday here."

"I hope he knows the difference now between a rhododendron and a rose. He didn't last year. I was disgusted."

"Rhododendron is a very long word for a very small boy," Ethel Pendarves pleaded.

"And it does mean rose-tree in Greek," John put in.

"Greek?" the host exclaimed. "What's he know about Greek? He couldn't read English properly last year. I never knew such a backward child. And all Tom Keigwin does is to guffaw about it."

Christabel was delighted by the story of her father's doubt whether she or her elder sister was the wife of Roger.

"Nunky, be careful," she warned old Geoffrey Vivian, "or father will be thinking Melisande is your daughter. And, Corinna, do try to be a little more excited over Melisande. I was much more excited about you when you were a baby."

"Well, you were older," Corinna pointed out. "People are always more excited about babies when they're older."

"Darling, I was only sixteen when you were born. I wasn't all that old," Christabel protested.

"I enjoyed Roger's last book," John put in.

"Did you?" exclaimed old Geoffrey Vivian. "I couldn't understand what it was all about. I wish you'd tell him to be a bit less

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roundabout, Ogilvie. He'd listen to your advice. He thinks I know nothing about novels."

"Darling Nunky, do you know a great deal? You only read detective stories," Christabel reminded him.

"I like a good straightforward story," Geoffrey Vivian insisted. "After all, a novel's meant to keep you amused. I don't pretend to be a philosopher."

Just then the author himself came in.

"Roger," his wife told him, "Nunky thinks your books are philosophical tripe."

The promising young novelist flushed.

"Now, look here, Christabel, I didn't say anything of the kind," the novelist's uncle protested.

"Well, what between your father, darling, who despises me because I'm not trying to write in a language that has not been spoken for about a couple of centuries and my uncle who despises me because I'm not Edgar Wallace, I'm afraid I'm not a great success. And certainly the public seems to agree with them," Roger added.

"Do you know the work of Astrid Hellner?" John asked him.

"Oh, rather," Roger replied with enthusiasm. "I think she's marvellous."

"She's the wife of a very old friend of mine—Emil Stern."

"Who's also her publisher," said Roger.

"Would you like to meet her?"

"I'd love to meet her."

"Then let me know when you'll be in London next, and I'm sure she'll be delighted to meet you."

Corinna made a face.

"Why this thusness, Corinna?" Christabel asked, oblivious of the slightly pained expression upon her husband's face at hearing such a phrase.

"I don't care much for Aunt Astrid," Corinna explained.

"Corinna," her father put in sharply, "I'd really rather you didn't volunteer these unrequested opinions."

"Well, I don't," she insisted.

"You have a right to hold your own opinion," he said, "but you've no right to inflict it on other people without being invited."

When John and his daughter were walking back to Pendarves House among the blue-men's-caps on the cliffs—columbines they

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call them out of Cornwall—Corinna suddenly asked:

"Father, how does Christabel know she's going to have a baby in December?"

John played for time.

"How do you know she does know?"

"I heard her say to you when we were walking round the garden 'I'm hoping to give Nunky a boy round about Christmas. I do want the old pet to feel there's a Vivian to come after Roger. Melisande is an angel, but he did want a Geoffrey.'"

"Yes, well, of course when people have old estates they always want to feel that the name will remain. I've told you before that if your grandmother had been a boy she would have inherited Pendarves House."

"Yes, I know that," said Corinna patiently. "I know that a woman can't choose whether a baby is going to be a boy or a girl. And I know that a baby comes from its mother. But I don't know how she knows *when* it will come. Did mother know I would come on January 14th?"

"She knew you would come about then, yes."

"How did she know?"

"You remember *Golden Corinna*?"

"Of course I do. We didn't see her this year. She was lovely last year, wasn't she?"

"Well, your mother and I were staying at Pendarves House for her birthday and Jennifer's on April 14th and that was the morning that Cousin Henry fertilized *Saffron Maid* with the pollen of *Triandrus Albus*, and that same morning . . ." He broke off. "I think I'll ask Aunt Prudence to tell you more when we go to Erpingham next month. There are several things about yourself I want her to tell you."

"Why don't you tell me?"

"Dearest, there are certain things which it is better for a woman to tell a little girl because she knows more about them. It's not very long for you to wait. You're fond of Aunt Prudence, aren't you?"

"Darling Father, I love Aunt Prudence. I'm sorry I said that about Aunt Astrid if it made you cross with me. I won't say it again. But she isn't really my aunt. So it doesn't matter so much if I don't like her as long as I don't say it, does it?"

"Why don't you like her?"

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"Well, I don't really think I could explain all of why," Corinna replied. "But I never did like her very much, and then I heard her say once, 'Poor John, it's pathetic what a lot of trouble he takes about these plays of his which have no importance at all.' I nearly said 'How dare you talk like that!', but I didn't, and because I didn't I hated her for a time. But I can't go on hating people. You didn't mind my asking you that about Christabel's baby?"

"Certainly I didn't mind. And you don't mind waiting till we go to Erpingham for Aunt Prudence to tell you what you want to know?"

She put her arm in his.

The visit to Cornwall was prolonged until nearly the end of June, and on the 28th John and Corinna were driven down to Norfolk by Noll Erpingham, who had been attending the debate on air armament in the House of Lords.

"Either the Government or the country is mad, John," he grumbled. "The Air Estimates last March were ludicrous. Philip Sassoon, who's only Under-Secretary, left us all in doubt what the Government's air policy really was, and Winston challenged Stanley Baldwin to make a clear statement. Baldwin, with one eye on Winston and the other roving round the electorate, promised that if some tin-pot conference or other was talked out the Government would see that this country was no longer in a position of air inferiority. Loud cheers from a subservient House—I was in the Peers' Gallery—and while they were resounding Stanley Baldwin and Philip Sassoon retired for a breather. This annoyed even their own supporters, one of whom complained that they were not sufficiently interested to listen to what their supporters thought about the Lord President of the Council's extremely important statement. What the loyal supporters wanted to know was whether the Government would set a time-limit to negotiations and then start building planes. By this time both the Lord President's two eyes were roving round the electorate and he declined to add anything to the statement he had made. In fact obviously the only people on the warpath so far as he was concerned were the pacifists.

"Well, then a few days later Monsell brought in the Navy Esti-

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mates, and he spent half the time telling the House that we must have big ships invulnerable to guns, torpedoes, mines, and aerial bombs. My god, John, I nearly let out a derisive hoot from the Peers' Gallery and blotted my escutcheon for good and all. You know, these sailors at the Admiralty think they're all swinging between the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay with Drake. Some of them indeed are mental contemporaries of Noah. Invulnerable from the air! And if you talk to them about submarines and aircraft working together they look at you as if you'd suggested that the crossbow was still a dangerous weapon."

"Yes, but, Noll, you must remember it's a fearfully grave step for this country to lead the way in air armament. If a convention can be reached I think it should be reached. Otherwise Europe will be destroyed in another war," said John.

"Yes, if a convention *can* be reached," Noll Erpingham went on. "But in my opinion Winston was right when he argued that international disarmament was a will-o'-the-wisp. He said our Government's notion of foreign policy was to go on asking the French to disarm on the understanding that if they got into trouble again we would come to their rescue. And then Simon, replying for the Government, twitted Winston with trying to draft the French reply to our damned Memorandum inviting the French to disarm and agree to the Germans' arming. It's really devastating to hear a complacent lawyer talk as if the future of Europe could be solved like a case between two next-door neighbours about what they could and could not keep in their backyards. And then the day after this Duff got up to tell the House that recruiting had fallen off seriously since last year. Duff blamed the Labour people for this, and I think he was right; but all the Government could think of to do about it was to form a new corps for soldiers no longer fit for active service to keep guard at important places in the event of war. I don't know what they think these old veterans are going to do when the bombs start coming down. Catch them, I suppose. Then war would be cricket again."

"You think war will come?" John asked.

"I can't answer that question, John, but I do know that the only thing to stop its coming is for us to re-arm as hard and as fast as we can and meanwhile give the French our support if they choose to tackle the Germans now. And in my opinion the best way we

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could help the French is to build a really big air force. I don't believe the country would object to rearmament if the country were given the facts. Last Friday the fellow who contested Twickenham improved the Conservative majority, although headquarters had forbidden him to fight the election on a programme of increased armaments. That cheered up the Cabinet and yesterday, when Mottistone demanded in the House of Lords that the country's air force should be doubled immediately, Charlie Londonderry let be understood pretty clearly that he sympathized even though for various reasons he couldn't accept such a proposal. I meant to speak in the debate, but my courage failed me again. It's a formidable business for a peer in his early thirties to tackle those potent, grave, and reverent signiors. Glassy eyes and horny beaks, what? I decided my intervention would do more harm than good to the prospect of strengthening our air force."

"Father says I can fly with you in your Moth, Uncle Noll, if you ask me," Corinna put in at this moment.

"If Prudence doesn't think it would be unfair to Sally, Simon, and Jeremy," John added hastily.

"Not a bit. Sally's only just had her ninth birthday," said Noll Erpingham. "Corinna's grown-up compared with her, aren't you? And by Jove, you have lengthened out, haven't you?" he exclaimed, looking at her.

"I grew when I had scarlet fever," she explained.

"So would rearmament if we could only inoculate the whole country," said Noll. "How's David getting on since he went back to Hollywood, John? The low fellow hasn't written me a line."

"I did hear from him the other day. Apparently there's been a Purity Campaign in the States, with the result that an English film about Nell Gwynn was refused."

"Oh, my god, John, don't make me laugh or I shall drive you into the ditch."

"What's a Purity Campaign?" Corinna asked.

"It's about the same thing in films as pacifism is in rearmament," said Noll Erpingham. "It means thinking that human nature can be cured of being naughty by taking away its toys."

"Mairi once locked up all my toys for a whole week when I was naughty," Corinna informed him.

"And was the experiment successful?" her uncle asked.

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"Do you mean did it make me not naughty?"

"Yes."

"Well, I don't know, because I wasn't wanting to be naughty just then. I'd done the naughty thing I'd wanted to do."

"May we ask what that was?" her father enquired.

"Climbing down a cliff to the secret beach because there was an otter in the cave. And I slid some of the way and tore my knickers and got a lot of green on my frock. It was a frightfully long time ago. It was the year before last."

"I say, I really must come up to your island, John," Noll exclaimed. "An otter in a cave. How marvellous!"

"You wouldn't try to shoot it?" Corinna asked quickly. "Nothing must be shot on the island. Nothing at all. Except perhaps a great black-backed gull if he drowns a puffin and then tears her to pieces."

"Did you ever see a black-back do that?" her uncle asked.

"Yes, I did, and it was horrid. He held the puffin under the water because he was afraid of her beak. The black-backs are cowardly bullies. I love it when one of them's chased by a skua."

"I simply must come up. It sounds too exciting for words," Noll declared. "By the way, John, have you seen Turner Rigden lately?"

"I saw him after we came back from France last year. I should have looked him up this spring, but Corinna's scarlet fever kept me to myself. He was as cheerful as ever and hoping to get out of the state of being an employé. I think I should have heard from him if he had succeeded."

"I always feel I owe Rigden a debt of gratitude over that yacht of his. I'm thinking of turning Erpingham into a limited liability company and I've a good mind to ask him to be a director. It wouldn't mean anything except his expenses and a nominal fee."

"That's a very considerate idea of yours, Noll. I'll give you his address in Woodford in case you decide to go ahead."

"My mother rather jibs at the notion, but something has to be done about this taxation. Old John Fanshawe, my father's younger brother, thinks it's a good notion, and he's a fairly wise old bachelor bird. Oh yes, I knew there was something I wanted to tell you. I met an old friend of yours the other day who saw you last in Athens during the war, Lady Warburton, with a pretty daughter

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Elizabeth, whose two sisters have both married the sons of worthy recently-created noblemen. I fancy Lady Warburton hopes to make Elizabeth Falconer a marchioness. She's a formidable dowager, and I hear may hook Tewkesbury's boy. I understand Elizabeth's three years older than young Cheltenham, but she's certainly a lovely creature. Very fair and slim, with a wonderful complexion."

"Like her mother when young—Rose Medlicott she was."

"Ah, you knew her *then*. She's rather purplish now and what one would have to call massive. She was interested to hear about you. I think Warburton has been dead some years."

"Yes, he was badly wounded in the war. He was a sick man when I saw him in Athens in 1916. There's no heir to the barony. Did you say purplish, Noll?"

"Yes, you know that scabbly bird's-egg complexion some women get in their fifties."

"Yes, yes," said John hastily.

And presently the car turned in through the gates of the park.

"We'll toddle along later and have a look at the Moth," Noll told his niece as they passed the hanger beside the empty space of level turf.

"How lovely, Uncle Noll," she said, clapping her hands.

The car drove on and swept round the ilex-grove into the avenue of oaks at the head of which stood the red-brick pile of Erpingham Hall, mellowed by the sea and wind, the frosts and rains, of three and a half centuries.

Prudence and John were walking arm-in-arm in the rose-garden on that long lovely June evening. Sally had just been fetched by Nannie for bed. Noll and Corinna were down at the hangar with orders that she was to be back for bed by a quarter-past nine.

"I love your Erpingham roses," John said. "They all smell. These new khaki and scarlet affairs they've been so busy raising since the war give me no pleasure. What's this delicious pointed port-wine-coloured rose?"

"That's *Sir Rowland Hill*—a mid-Victorian survival. He's very good. And here's *General Jacqueminot*, the perfect crimson rose, I think, though he's too small for the size-worshippers of

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to-day. *Catherine Mermet* whom I love almost best of all isn't out yet, but here's *Caroline Testout* rather pink and plump and coarse. . . . I think I shall be like *Caroline Testout* twenty years hence, John."

"We won't talk about that. I've just had rather a discouraging picture of my first love."

"Gabrielle Derozier?"

"No, no, Rose Medicott . . . oh, Gabrielle looked marvellous last year. I wrote and told you about her. I'd never realized that you made her your confidante when you were wondering if you would marry Noll."

"Well, she offered her advice really, and I think it was good advice," Prudence said.

"It was admirable advice. It's a pity you're so tied up by matronly responsibilities. You'd enjoy a visit to Larnay-Mozère. But you'd have to go alone. Her husband speaks practically no English and Noll's French is not exactly fluent. The best of good talk peters out under continual translation. She was awfully good to Corinna. . . . Prudence darling, Corinna is growing faster than I expected," John said suddenly.

"I noticed a great difference this year," his sister agreed. "She'll only be fourteen in January, but I think I would guess her to be fourteen now."

"I know. I've been wondering. She's beginning to ask difficult questions too," John said, and he told about the question asked last month. "And I just shied at answering and promised you would tell her. I thought perhaps when I go up to the island for a week or two at the end of July you might have a talk with her about one or two things. I'm planning to take her to Italy for the winter as you know, and that means she'll be four months past fourteen when she gets back to this country. You and Athene were both nearly fifteen . . . but . . ."

"I think she should be told very soon. Yes, darling, of course I'll undertake the business."

"And the Pendarves question? You do think it's better to tell her the facts as frankly as possible?" John asked anxiously.

"Much better," his sister agreed. "Luckily she'll have been spared those preposterous theories which circulate in schools. I think they are a disaster, or they can be for some girls. I told you

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long ago I always thought mother was rather stupid and also rather cowardly in the way she really shirked the whole business. I should have been a very easy child to tell, and so I know will Corinna. Older people will not try to realize the state of helpless baffled ignorance in which a girl can exist—for years sometimes. I did myself really, because even though I knew the facts I hadn't a ghost of a notion how to use my knowledge to my own advantage. That's why I tackled you in desperation that winter day in Cornwall. And so you're going to take Corinna to Italy? Lucky child! Oh, the excitement of that journey with you and David when I found myself in the *wagon-lit* with the headmistress of St James's. And other journeys afterwards." She sighed. "I'd love to be coming with you, John."

"Is it out of the question?"

"Of course it is. Miss Marlowe is an excellent governess and Nannie is wonderful; but I know if I weren't here there'd be a clash, and it wouldn't be fair on Noll."

"He's getting very much worked-up over our weakness in the air," John observed.

"My dear, you're telling me. Surely we shan't have another war, shall we?"

"Not if our Government will face up to the situation in Germany in time. But will they? I'm afraid a blind electorate has charged a blind Government with the task of leading them. I can't say I feel cheerful about the prospect."

The voices of Corinna and Noll were heard beyond the rose-garden.

"Father, Father," she was calling, and when she came running through the gate between the old red-brick walls her cheeks were flecked with crimson like a briar-rose.

"Here we are."

"Father, Uncle Noll says he'll fly me to Norwich to-morrow. To Norwich!"

"I hope he won't come tumbling down like the man in the moon in the nursery rhyme and have to ask his way there," John said.

"Is there a good landing near Norwich?" Prudence asked anxiously.

"My dear Prue, of course there is," the owner of the Moth

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assured her, compassion in his tones.

"You'll come down to the field and see us start, won't you?" Corinna begged of her father.

"I will if you're asleep in half an hour," he promised. "Not otherwise. I'll receive a report from Mairi to-morrow morning. And now off to bed with you."

"I shall try to sleep as soon as I can," Corinna announced. "Because the sooner I'm asleep the quicker it'll be to-morrow morning. Good-night, darling Aunt Prudence. Good-night, darling Father. Good-night, darling darling Uncle Noll."

John left Corinna at Erpingham when he went up to the island at the end of July. She was to go and stay with the Sterns later in August at Broadbent Hall, the house in Hampshire they had taken again for the summer. When the holidays came to an end she was to go to Church Row and get new clothes under Lady Ogilvie's supervision before her father took her with him to Italy at the end of September.

Padraig had pulled off a scholarship at Pembroke College and was to go up to Oxford next October. He had been anxious to return the hospitality of his friend Jack Marsham in Switzerland, and it was to enable him to do this that John had decided the island required his presence and suggested that the two boys should travel north with him when Ampleaside broke up.

While he was in London for a day or two John went to see Ellen Fitzgerald at her flat in one of those Brobdingnagian beehives which had recently obliterated two or three acres of old Chelsea. She was acting in the play of his that was running at the Irving Theatre.

"And it looks like running right through the autumn," John said, "which is gratifying for the author but prevents him from inviting one of the caste to enjoy an August holiday."

"I'm happy enough, John, playing this decayed Irishwoman of the ascendancy who lives on selling her ancestors' portraits and breeding setters. It's the best part I've had for a long while. And luckily you only set one act in Ireland. That's all an English audience will stand of my still distressed country. Anyway, Padraig sees quite enough of his spinster aunt."

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"He'll manage all right at Oxford with the scholarship money and what Tinoran brings in," John said. "But I can always come to the rescue if necessary. I feel rather selfish in going off to Italy before seeing him established."

"Not at all, John. Let him stand on his own feet," Ellen said warmly.

"He's youngish, you know. Only just eighteen. However, that's all to the good for this consular service he's set his heart on. He ought to have his future clearly mapped out for him by 1939, though what his father would say to us both I dare not think."

"Edward will see things a bit more sensibly where he is now, God be good to him," she murmured.

"We might be wrong, you know, Ellen."

"Wrong or right we couldn't have influenced Padraig one way or the other. He made up his mind for himself, and if we'd taken him away from Ampleside he'd have broken his heart. Och, Padraig's all right, John. He reminds me of my dear old father, God rest his soul," she sighed. "And how's my blessed Corinna?"

"Growing up alarmingly fast and thinking about nothing except flying."

"Flying? Now where does she get that from?"

"It's no use asking that, Ellen. The children of to-day are all sprouting wings while we of our generation can only contemplate our almost atrophied little toes."

"Yes, yes, that's just about what it is, John. I'm longing to see my goddaughter. It was a sad business I couldn't be seeing her in the spring, poor lamb."

"I had my play to think of," said John. "I wasn't going to have you handing scarlet fever round the dressing-rooms at the Irving. Tell me, Ellen, do you really like this concrete ant-heap in which you've chosen to dwell?"

"They're splendid flats, my dear. You don't have to go outside for anything. And they're beautifully built. You can't hear a sound from either side of you. I don't even know the people by sight."

John shuddered.

"I think it's a horrible place."

"Horrible? Do you think I'd want to live in a house again after this? Not on your life, John. Everything's done for you here."

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Why, they even give you the wireless."

John shuddered again.

"I'm glad I wasn't born last week," he murmured. "I'm glad I smoked the fag-end of individual existence."

"Would you like a cup of tea, John?" she asked, and when he said he would she picked up the telephone-receiver to give the order.

He shook his head sadly.

"I suppose in another twenty years making your own tea will be as absurd an old-fashioned accomplishment for a woman as the mysterious brews she once made in the still-room."

"It's all very fine to talk like that, John, but why should a working woman like me waste her energy and what leisure she has on making tea?"

"How many centuries will it take before the human beehive is perfected and all males have become drones?" John speculated.

"Och, I wouldn't worry my head about that if I were you. You and I will have been dust for ages before that happens."

John asked Padraig next day when they were in the train northward bound what he thought of his aunt's flat in that Brobdingnagian hive.

"Jolly good, Uncle John. You thought it was jolly good too, didn't you, Jack?"

"Marvellous," affirmed Jack Marsham, who was like dozens of other fresh-complexioned eighteen-year-old public schoolboys. "I say shall we see Ben Nevis from the train, sir?"

"No, we're going by Inverness and Portrose," he was told. "We see Ben Nevis when we take the boat from Mallaig."

"Jack and I might travel back by Mallaig, don't you think?" Padraig suggested.

"Certainly," John agreed. "He'll get a glimpse of the Prince Charlie country that way."

"I'm rather keen to see how Ben Nevis compares with Mt. Blanc, sir," Jack Marsham explained.

"I'm afraid you'll hardly think it a mountain at all by your Alpine standards," John said.

"Do you know Switzerland well, sir?" Jack Marsham asked.

"Oh, I've been to Lucerne and Grindelwald and Geneva," John

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replied. "But not since I was seventeen."

"Did you do any skiing, sir?"

John shook his head.

"It's marvellous, isn't it, Peter?"

"Absolutely marvellous," Padraig agreed.

If the mountains of Scotland failed to impress Jack Marsham, and all his politeness did not avail him to conceal the fact that they had, nobody could have displayed a warmer admiration of the islands. They were accorded all the fashionably enthusiastic epithets of the moment, they and the birds and the seals and the pollack-fishing."

In the first week of August John received a letter from Tarbert in the Island of Harris:

Dear Mr Ogilvie,

I do not know if you can remember how we met two years ago on the occasion of the opening of the hostel in the High Tatra. You kindly invited me to call upon you in the next summer if I would be in Scotland. However on making enquiries I was informed that you were away and so I have not had the pleasure to see you. I am presently in Tarbert and it would give me so much pleasure if I could visit you on your island. I understand that your boat leaves from Flodday three times a week and perhaps I might be permitted to take a place in it on a day convenient for you.

Yours respectfully,

Heinrich Bäuer

John at once sent a note by the *Flora* inviting the young German to spend a couple of nights on the island.

"This is so very kind of you, Mr Ogilvie," the visitor said as he came ashore and shook John's hand warmly. He was wearing the same corduroy shorts as in Poland, but instead of the white stockings he had worn then he now wore a greenish-brown pair.

"What a wonderful place you have here," he exclaimed, looking up the path that led to Tigh nan Ròn. "I have travelled in all the Hebrides, but this is the most beautiful house I have seen. It has been difficult to build, yes?"

Soon there was much clicking of heels when Jack Marsham and Padraig were presented to the visitor, because Jack Marsham was

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used to the formal German manner of greeting and responded with such a loud click himself that Padraig felt bound to do the same on the strength of his visits to Switzerland.

After lunch a voyage was made round the cliffs and shores of the three islands, which roused the German to an almost continuous expression of wonder at such scenic magnificence. Above all, the half-mile of dark basaltic columns that rose in serried regularity for six hundred feet on the north side of Garbh Eilean won from him a genuine awe of amazement at such a masterpiece of nature.

"Why are these cliffs not better known?" he demanded. "I cannot understand. Fingal's Cave in Staffa is good, yes. But it is nothing compared with this. And the Giant's Causeway, that is nothing compared with this. I am altogether overcome by this wonderful sight."

"It is rather staggering, isn't it?" Jack Marsham agreed.

"Ach, it is sublime. No painter could make it. It requires some fugue of Bach played upon a mighty organ," Bauer insisted solemnly.

"In a way it's even more wonderful when the birds have gone," John said. "And they will be gone any night now. Kittiwakes perched upon the ledges chipped out of those huge columns somehow deprive them of their full majesty."

"Basalt you call this rock?" Bauer asked. "So?"

"Yes," said John. "If you take a pencil and draw a straight line from the Faroes to the Giant's Causeway you'll then see the length and direction of the seismic convulsion which produced these basaltic formations just about a million years ago. What a sight for those three-million-year-old hills of Harris and Lewis, that fiery convulsion in which rocks were melted into syrup and in cooling got their shape like sugar crystals. Most of the columns here are hexagonal."

"I am still wondering why such cliffs are not world-famous. *Ja, ja, ja*," the young German repeated, "if Mendelssohn had visited these islands as well as Staffa he might have written a piece of better music for his Hebrides overture, though I do not think he would, because he was a Jew."

"Greater composers than Mendelssohn might have been baffled by the task of setting that line of columns to music," John said.

"Yes, yes, you are right, Mr Ogilvie. And it is not a straight line,

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that is what is so impressive. It is a gigantic curve about a hundred feet lower at either end and culminating in the centre like some titanic fluted shell. So? Fluted is correct for what I try to say?"

"Most exact. I hadn't thought before of the likeness to a shell. That was well observed, Herr Bauer. And if you've been to Staffa you'll remember a shell formation there on an immensely smaller scale. However, the Staffa columns are much more regular."

"Yes, they are more regular, but it is easy to be more regular for a hundred feet than for five and six hundred feet," Bauer pointed out. "I am astonished that this wonderful sight is unknown. I have had no idea of it, and I am now coming to the Hebrides four times."

"Why do you like them so much?" John asked.

The young German shrugged his shoulders. "I find them so fascinating. I like the people so much."

"And perhaps you're interested in the tides and in the rocks they uncover and cover again?" John asked, looking hard at his guest.

"No, I try to paint some marine pictures, that is all," Bauer replied. "I wish I could paint these columns, but alas, that would be beyond me."

A silence fell in the boat. The immense sunless arc of those dark columns impended upon the bottle-green water at their base. The bright sky above them fringed with earthy verdure seemed as unattainable as Heaven from Hell. The crying of many myriads of birds sounded like an expression of human perplexity and despair. The air was salty and dank, and the edge of the sea which lapped the black hexagons that rose from its deeps was frilled with stale froth of such a hue as stout leaves in a pewter tankard.

"Come along, let's get back into the sun," said John.

The next day Pdraig and Jack Marsham who had a fishing expedition on hand left John and his guest at the *mòl*, the beach of grey stones rolled smooth by the surf that beat upon it on either side, which joined Church Island and Rough Island. They scrambled up the dizzy path that led to the top of the latter and then slid down a steep brae of vivid green grass to sit among the fragments of broken columns which time had humbled. These fragments,

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many of them twenty and thirty feet long, had kept their hexagonal shape, but they had lost their greenish-black polish and were covered some with orange, some with hoary grey lichen, so that they appeared like the ruins of a temple built by man. That they had once confronted the sea and defied it for aeons was now unimaginable.

"This is sublime, it is really sublime," the young German avowed, throwing back his head to let the light breeze blow through his fair locks.

Through what could almost be called a blizzard of birds—puffins, razorbills, guillemots, kittiwakes, herring gulls, common gulls, lesser black-backed gulls, and fulmar petrels—the white walls and black Ballachulish slates of Tigh nan Ròn were seen across a stretch of calm green water on which the birds lay like snow. The air was vibrant with thousands of wings. The prostrate column against which they leant was the perch of thirty or forty puffins, their fast-fading beaks still further dulled, their webbed feet dislustred by the vivid orange lichen.

"I think they will soon be gone," said John. "Perhaps we shall wake to-morrow and find the islands empty. We have no trees to shed their leaves. When the birds go, autumn is here. And when the geese arrive in October they bring winter with them. Hulla, there's a whale."

"A whale? You have whales in your islands?" Bauer exclaimed.

"Do you see him? Like a great dolphin. And there's the sail of a basking shark. Like the conning-tower of a U-boat, eh?" he asked, turning sharply to look at his guest.

"This would be bad water for U-boats," said Bauer. "The bottom is very irregular."

"You wouldn't advise this part of the Minch for U-boats, eh?" John pressed gently.

"Why should I advise about U-boats? I am not at all naval," Bauer replied.

"And you still admire Hitler?"

"I have told you before. He was necessary for the soul of the German people. He has given us back faith in ourselves."

"You admired the way he had some of his best friends murdered at the end of June?"

"It was necessary. And it was the only way."

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"And you think that the murder of Dolfuss a fortnight ago was necessary?"

"He was persecuting the National Socialists," Bauer declared.

"And when will you start murdering in Czechoslovakia?" John asked with a harsh directness.

"I do not understand why you English people are all so suspicious of Adolf Hitler," said Bauer reproachfully. "He has said again and again that his only object is peace."

"He has said it *ad nauseam*, but if he can turn on his friends as he did on that last night of June, what kind of trust can those whom he believes to be his enemies place in his words?"

"He was doing a service to European peace when he had Roehm and Heines and the rest of them killed," Bauer insisted. "They were the Nazis who desired more and more violence."

"Were the Catholics he had murdered at the same time a menace to European peace?"

"They were a menace to the unity of the Reich. But let us please put Adolf Hitler aside in this discussion. It is perhaps because he is not of high birth that you are surprised he can lead a great nation like Germany. But let us please leave him aside. Why are the English not willing to join with Germany for the good of the rest of the world? Is it that they are jealous? Is it they fear to become second? Is it what?"

"Do you want me to be frank?" John asked.

"Please," replied the visitor, with a polite inclination of his fair head.

"First of all you assume that Germany is a great nation. What have you done for the world to justify such an assumption? Yes, you have given the world most of its greatest music. You have added a certain amount to science and medicine, but not nearly as much as you suppose. You have shown yourselves capable of producing one supremely civilized man in Goethe. But what else have you done except fight well when you were better armed and better equipped than your adversaries? Your philosophers of whom you think so much are windbags if you set them beside the great philosophers of Greece, or the great philosophers of Latin Christianity. Your historians have mostly been turgid pedants. Your poets, except Heine who was a Jew and Goethe who as a German was a freak, are all second-rate. You haven't even produced a

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novelist of the first mark. Yes, you certainly produced Luther who was a virile concupiscent brute, and you paid for him with the Thirty Years' War. You produced Frederick of Prussia who was an acquisitive pederast and a good soldier. And now you've produced this sexless revivalist vegetarian who has known how to titillate the fundamental homosexuality of the Teuton and yet keep him breeding. You ask why the British will not join with you for the good of the rest of the world, and the answer is that the British cannot join with a nation of loutish adolescents. The English used you as mercenaries in the eighteenth century, and God knows with your help they committed crimes enough against the true civilization of Europe, but they've advanced since then, not nearly so far as they ought to have advanced it's true, but you are still where you were, mentally, morally, and physically. There's no deterioration. You have all the vigour of adolescence, but you're suffering from arrested development. We couldn't ally ourselves with you. What you think is jealousy and an instinctive fear of your superiority is a deep-rooted conviction that we should be somehow degraded by an alliance with Germany. The English are snobs, the same kind of snobs as the old Romans were. Oh yes, they can ally themselves with the French and still feel superior, but that's as a man feels superior to a woman. They feel superior to Germans as a gentleman feels himself superior to a cad."

"I cannot remain here as your guest. You have insulted me," said the young German in considerable agitation. "I found you very sympathetic and was pleased when you invited me to stay with you, but I did not think you invited me to insult me."

"I had a purpose," John replied. "I want you, when you send in the information you have gathered for your Admiralty or Secret Service or whoever is employing you . . ."

"I am not employed."

"All right, you're serving your country gratis. Well, I want you to report that it's idle to suppose that because idiotic young men in Britain pass resolutions that they will not fight for King or Country, that because a feeble Government fawns on an ignorant electorate by pretending it is not going to rearm, and that because a man like Winston Churchill is out of office it means that Germany will be able to proceed with her plan to dominate Europe without interference from Britain. Sooner or later Britain will turn and

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as always win the last battle. On the other hand I've no doubt whatever that if Germany kicks out this medium she thinks controls her soul and demonstrates her capacity to honour the comity of nations there would be a general revulsion of feeling in England. The fact is that the English really do like the Germans as individuals better than they like the individuals of other nations, and they see in these individuals a much nearer approach to their own attitude toward life than they perceive in the Latin or the Slav, or even the so-called Celt. They cannot understand why such agreeable individuals can combine to revert into such a barbaric mass. I am sure that if Germany as a whole could behave with dignity and decency for long enough to convince people that such dignity and decency was not the sheep's clothing of the wolf there would soon be a large body of opinion in this country which would press for a genuine *rapprochement* between Britain and Germany."

"But how could there be a *rapprochement* with a nation of whom you think as you have told me the British think of Germany?" Bauer asked gloomily.

"I wanted you to realize that you Germans have got to correct that impression of your character. You have got to learn to behave before you are accepted as equals by the British. I mean to say, this monstrous *Judenhetze* in which you've been indulging . . . we just think it puts you outside the pale. It's no good your trying to tell us that the Jews are obnoxious. We have plenty of people in this country who are just as convinced as you are that Jews are obnoxious. But nobody would treat them as you have treated them. We don't like bullying. All we think is that you're trying to restore your confidence in your own strength after the beating you got in the war."

"We were not beaten. It was the Jews who corrupted the country behind our soldiers," Bauer declared with a passionate conviction.

"Your soldiers were beaten, Herr Bauer, in the field, not at home. For us your sudden collapse was really a disaster. We should have driven your armies over the Rhine before Christmas, and by Easter 1919 we should have overrun Germany."

"That is what you say, Mr Ogilvie."

"It's what everybody says except the Germans themselves. You suffer from a delusion of invincibility. If you are so invincible,

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why are you not in a better position than you are, or at any rate why were you not in a better position before you ever started the World War? Your conquest of the Berlin Jews isn't a mark of invincibility. Your conquest of France in 1870 was not a mark of invincibility: it was a mark of French weakness at the time. Napoleon whipped you. You couldn't have won Waterloo without us, though I'll agree we couldn't have won Waterloo without you. You convinced yourselves before the war that you could beat us. Well, you couldn't. You may convince yourselves that you can beat us in another war. You won't. You think it's the English Channel that protects us. You can thank your stars for the English Channel because it has protected you long enough. If we hadn't had the sea between us and Europe we should have been a very much more aggressive power than we always were, and I doubt if there would ever have been a First Reich let alone a Third. I know that to Germans British superiority is a mystery—an incomprehensibly maddeningly irrational mystery. But it exists, and it will only be when Germany discovers why it exists that Germany will have any chance to become a great nation."

"Excuse me, please, have you read *Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, by the great English writer Houston Stewart Chamberlain?" the young German asked.

"I have, and I regard those foundations of the nineteenth century as worthless rubble," John replied emphatically.

"You call the art and literature and philosophy of Greece; the laws of Rome; the Christian revelation; the disruptive force of Judaism; and the regenerative and ennobling power of the Teutonic race worthless rubble?"

"As laid by that lunatic sciolist aesthete, yes," John declared. "You are a Catholic," he continued severely.

"Yes."

"Do you remember Chamberlain's attitude toward Catholicism?"

"Excuse me. I agree with him that the Catholic Church has been hindered in her progress since the German Italy of the Middle Ages. Perhaps Chamberlain may be wrong to seek to find in Luther the expression of German Christianity. I think myself the better thing will be for the Pope always to be German. Certainly the great Popes of the Middle Ages were of Teutonic blood.

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Dante was certainly Teuton. You see it at once in his noble countenance. The trouble is that the Papacy has since the Renaissance been too much in the hands of Latins of inferior culture."

"Well, you'll have to argue that out with the Holy Ghost," said John. "And I'm sure that even such a controversy would not daunt one of your flatulent racial theorists. If you claim Dante as a Teuton, why not claim Leonardo and Michelangelo as well?"

"The claim has been made and very convincingly shown to be true," said Bauer. "Have you read any of the books of Ludwig Woltmann?"

"I never heard of him," John replied.

"Nevertheless he is a very great writer. *Die Germanen und die Renaissance in Italien* and *Die Germanen in Frankreich* are two wonderful books. You will find that Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo, Voltaire, Dante, Raphael, Michelangelo, and of course Shakespeare were all Lombards and Goths and therefore Teutons. So were Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, and Woltmann believes that Napoleon was probably of Vandal descent."

"Which one may presume explains his ability to whip the Prussians at Jena," John put in.

"I cannot produce for you all Woltmann's arguments. You can read them for yourself. For instance, he shows Giotto to be the German Jothe, Vinci to be Wincke, and Alighieri to be Aigler. Buonarrotti is Bohurodt and Tasso is Dasse. You find even in Spain that Velasquez and Murillo are the Visigoth names Velahise and Moerl. And in France Diderot is Tietroh and Gounod Gundiwald.

"So that when we talk about Goths and Vandals as people blind to the beauty of great art we are maligning two cultured races who were responsible for half the great art in the world?" John asked ironically. "No wonder you Germans did not mind destroying Louvain and knocking to pieces the cathedral of Reims. You thought you could replace them so easily. I hope your theories won't get hold of my own countrymen. If there was another war they might start destroying the monuments of civilization under the impression that the amount of Teutonic blood in them would provide all the great artists required to replace them. I look forward with some eagerness to a concrete Parthenon and a surrealist Sistine Chapel."

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"I do not think that any general would be justified in sacrificing the lives of his soldiers to save any monument or any work of art," Bauer said.

"My answer to that is first that I am not prepared to accept as final the opinion of any general about either a strategic or tactical necessity. It is too easy an excuse to justify what may be his own incompetence by an appeal to sentiment. No doubt the Venetian commander who gave the order—to a German gunner by the way—to bombard the Parthenon would have justified himself by saying that the Turks were using it as a strongpoint and had a gunpowder magazine there which by exploding did the main damage, and that he had the lives of the men under his command to consider. But does anybody now think the lives of a few Venetian soldiers and their mercenaries were worth preserving in 1687 at such a cost to posterity? The sentimentalists who assess human life above the Parthenon are on the horns of a dilemma. Either they believe in personal immortality, in which case obviously the souls of these Venetians in eternity contemplate with dismay the destruction of the Parthenon in order to postpone their immortal life by stretching them out longer upon the rack of this world, or they believe that the life of man on this earth is all, in which case we are invited to sacrifice everything to the prolongation of such a life, which is merely a life that is a little more sagacious than an ape's and a little less prolonged than an elephant's. If the life of man is to be accorded such consideration we must be logical and accord equal consideration like the devout Buddhist to the life of the meanest insect."

"But I do not agree, Mr Ogilvie. I think that putting aside the question of immortality the lives of some nations are more valuable than the lives of others. Have you perhaps read a book by J. L. Reimer which was published before the war? It is called *Ein pangermanisches Deutschland*."

"Never heard of it."

"It is most interesting because it seems to foreshadow so much of what Adolf Hitler has taught us. He wishes to create a world dominion of pure-blooded German workers. He wishes an ideal Socialism which he believes can be achieved thus after the failure of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages to unify Europe through the Empire and the Papacy. He points out that the first

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necessity for Germany is to conquer Austria, Italy, and France. You will understand he was writing before the war and therefore it is the Austro-Hungarian Empire he means. We Sudeten Germans who are now under the heels of the Czechs must finally secure that the Czechs are under us. And Adolf Hitler who is himself an Austrian cannot rest until he has achieved the natural incorporation of Austria within the Third Reich. The smaller states of Europe like Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden must be persuaded to join this great German Empire. England, Spain, Portugal, and Russia Reimer does not regard as truly European. The ultimate object of this German workers' dominium would be gradually to eliminate the non-Germanic elements."

"Very jolly for them," John commented. "How's it to be done?"

"It will be done by a caste system based on the proportion of pure German blood. The highest caste will consist of the tall dolichocephalic Teutons with blue eyes, fair hair, and a rosy complexion."

"Like Nietzsche's blond beast, and incidentally yourself," John observed. "If I may say so, you find most of these representations of an ideal Teutonism not in Germany but in Scandinavia. Climate will do more to produce your highest caste than anything. But go on."

"Only the upper caste would possess full political rights. There would be a class below them with a certain amount of German blood who would possess restricted political rights. And there would be a third class of non-German people who would have no political rights at all. These people would be treated kindly but everything would be done to render them incapable of breeding in the interest of the future development of mankind. The male Germans would be encouraged to practise polygamy in order to increase the highest German blood."

"I thought you were a Catholic," John began, but Bauer held up his hand.

"Please, I come now to where I am not so much in agreement with Reimer. Reimer believes that in order to keep the low non-German element content in what would be a form of slavery Catholicism would be their official religion, but he wishes to pro-

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hibit such a religion for the pure Germans in favour of a pantheistic nature worship. I myself would rather the Catholic Church was reorganized on a human model and adapted to the use of every class."

"That's considerate of you," John said. "Does your friend Reimer point out that the three-caste system in Sparta was something of a failure in its day? But I mustn't be too scornful of your Teutonic ethnomaniacs. We have plenty of Anglo-Saxon ethnomaniacs both here and in America. Ours find their ultimate absurdity in British Israel, the Americans found theirs in the Ku Klux Klan."

"What is British Israel? It is another attempt by the Jews to disrupt our Aryan society?" the young German asked.

"Oh no. British Israel is a purely Anglo-Saxon idea. British Israelites believe that the Anglo-Saxons are the descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes and that they have been chosen by God to be the rulers of the earth. In the course of acquiring the earth they will demonstrate their fitness to be the Chosen People by restoring evangelical Christianity, the strict observance of the Sabbath, and reverence for the Holy Bible. They have a British peer for their president, a member of the Royal Family for their patron, and claim a membership here and in the United States of two million people. Some say they are mixed up with Freemasonry. I have no evidence of that. Incidentally, here in the Hebrides you will find a strong belief that the islands hold all that is left of the Ten Lost Tribes. They don't admit the Anglo-Saxon claim. But leave the elusive Tribes out of it. There are innumerable people who believe that the Anglo-Saxons have displaced the Jews as God's white-headed boys."

"Pardon?"

"As God's Elect. Now, I am one of those perverse people who deny this overwhelming Anglo-Saxondom of the British. I conceived a prejudice against it while I was still a schoolboy, and fixed it when I was an undergraduate. You will not be surprised after what I said to you just now that I am not enamoured of the notion that the political institutions of Britain are to be found in their embryonic glory in the pages of Tacitus, whose brilliant account of the Germans was in any case only a subtle way of expressing his hatred of Caesarianism and who deliberately idealized the Germans' love of liberty. You modern Germans do not like liberty and

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therefore you don't quote Tacitus like our Germanic Anglo-Saxons whose most cherished belief is that they love liberty above everything. It is a delusion. What the English like, as Rousseau said, is the liberty to choose by whom they will be ruled. The reason for this is the appalling mental laziness of the Englishman. This spring the Government brought in a Bill to make the possession of what the Government chooses to consider seditious literature a criminal offence and empower justices to grant search warrants if satisfied that there are grounds for suspecting that an offence under the Bill is being committed. I have no doubt whatever that when that Bill comes up for its Third Reading in the autumn session it will be passed by both Houses of Parliament. There will soon be no limit in this country to the extent to which the judiciary will become as servile as the legislature to the demands of the executive. However, that is by the way. Undoubtedly our Anglo-Saxon enthusiasts genuinely did believe that England was Germanic in race, language, and political institutions. A great constitutional historian called Stubbs seemed to have annihilated the opposition. I was lucky enough to read an able Frenchman's examination of English origins—Fustel de Coulanges was his name, and I devoted my enthusiasm whenever it was possible to display it by exasperating my tutors with what seemed to them a most perverse scepticism over Anglo-Saxondom. I mocked at Freeman's ponderous tomes about the Norman Conquest. I kicked J. R. Green's *History of the English People* round my room; I'll show you its broken back when we go back to the house. I lost no opportunity of jeering at Macaulay and Froude, and I derided Seeley's *Growth of English Policy*. As a boy Rudyard Kipling's doggerel had nauseated me and Charles Kingsley's novels I had solemnly burnt. As half a Scot, half a Cornishman, and with a French grandmother I could take a fairly objective view of the English, and I could see a great deal of unpleasant Anglo-Saxonism in them; but I could recognize the other strains which had led to the English being more civilized than the Germans. It seemed to me then, and it still seems to me now, that I perceived in the English a good deal of the ancient Roman and all my reading convinces me more and more firmly that there is probably more ancient Roman blood in England than in any other country in Europe. I believe it is that Roman blood mixed with a great deal of Celtic and Iberian

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blood and with more Scandinavian than Saxon blood which makes the English a master race. The English may not be logical, but they are reasonable. They are reasonable in the same way as a mongrel is more reasonable than a pure-bred pedigree hound. They are extremely volatile—that was the characteristic every foreigner remarked in them throughout the Middle Ages and even Scottish travellers as late as the eighteenth century—and you cannot persuade me that volatility is a characteristic of Saxons. The war was a disaster for the English because the Germanic qualities in them had to be brought out in order to beat you Germans. There was an inevitable deterioration, and this recent motion passed at University after University about not fighting for King and Country was an expression of disgust at the silliness war must seem to a comparatively civilized people. The French of course are more civilized even than the English, but they haven't the Channel between them and what to both the English and French seem the German barbarians. The French, perpetually frightened of you, must hate you. The English on the other hand, not being afraid of you, like you."

"How can you say the English like us?" demanded Bauer. "They have left us in misery since Versailles."

"On the contrary they've been pouring money into your country, at the expense of their own."

"Only because it has been profitable to your Jewish financiers."

"Oh, do get rid of the idea that English finance is Jewish finance. English finance is extremely English and to a large extent in the hands of Quakers. I agree with you that the motive for trying to put you on your feet was gain, but our financiers could not have poured money into Germany unless the people of England had felt goodwill towards you."

"Yet a little time ago you were telling me that the English could never be allies of Germany because they look down on Germany."

"Not with the Germany that was revealed by the war. And not now with the Germany that has revealed itself through the personality of Hitler. At first they thought him a comic figure. The persecution of the Jews made them wonder if he was quite so comic as they thought, and now the night of June 30th has convinced them that, though he himself is still an essentially comic figure, he is also a madman and capable of committing one of the great sins in English eyes—the sin of not knowing where to stop."

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"You English living in comfort for so long, you cannot understand what Adolf Hitler has done for the soul of the German people. We were in despair."

"Only because you thought for four years you were winning a war for which you were far more responsible than any other nation, and then suddenly discovered that you had lost it."

"Our soldiers did not lose it," Bauer insisted.

"All right, as long as you believe that nonsense you will go to war again, and if you do you will again enjoy a few years of supposing you have won only to find suddenly that you have lost. And you mustn't expect such tolerant treatment another time."

"Tolerant treatment?" Bauer ejaculated. "You call the crime of Versailles tolerant treatment?"

"Much too tolerant in my opinion for the crime the German people committed against humanity."

"It is tolerant to go on starving children and women when your enemy is down?"

"That was a blunder, I agree. But it was not done out of viciousness. It was another instance of the mental laziness of the English. Nevertheless, if you set in the balance the crimes committed by Germany with her ally Turkey on women and children in the course of the war against the crime—I will call it that—of starving the women and children of Germany and Austria after the armistice, the scales would sink with the weight of German and Turkish crimes."

"Have you seen Germany and Austria in the years just after Versailles?" Bauer asked.

"I saw enough of the misery caused by Germany, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria during the war. And now Germany, the most guilty of all, is allowing this witch-doctor to flatter her into taking a furious revenge."

"There will be no fury and no revenge if we are granted our rightful position."

"Of course not," John agreed. "So long as you get all you want you will not try to take more. And unfortunately you think that because you want something it must be right for you to have it. You are a nation of introverts. I once read somewhere that introversion was a characteristic of the so-called Nordic races, introversion, drunkenness, divorce, suicide, and Protestantism. Certainly

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the statistics for suicide per million in Germany were for thirty years and more before the war twice that of any other country except, as I remember, Denmark. I know Ireland, Italy, and Spain were the lowest. And Russia was low too. England was not a third of Germany, and Scotland was not a quarter. Obviously suicide is characteristic of the introvert. So is music. You lead in both. The introverted English intelligentsia is markedly sympathetic with Germany, but you may lose that sympathy if you let Hitler get too much out of hand, because the same intelligentsia is markedly sympathetic with Jewry. That's the puritan inheritance. Yes, you are certainly the most introverted nation in Europe. You are so introverted that you cannot grasp the most elementary desires of other people. You believe that you must know what is best for them and you are genuinely amazed when they don't agree with you. You go one better than Descartes when he said 'I think therefore I am.' You say 'I think therefore *you* are.' Almost every one of your philosophers has been tainted with this subjective idealism, and the ones that have tried to escape from it have usually gone mad."

"And do the English never try to impose their own opinions upon other people?" Bauer asked. "How can you excuse their treatment of India? No nation is so hypocritical in its pretence that its own interests are the interests of others."

"I never said there wasn't a lot of rampant Anglo-Saxonism in the English. All I claimed was that there was less of it than was believed by Dr Stubbs and the rest of them. In their treatment of India the English are at their most Anglo-Saxon. I think probably the sun affects them after a time. The English and the Germans can neither of them stand up to the sun. That's why the French are such much better colonists than either. I'm not referring to the Dominions; but if you include them, the Scots colonized New Zealand, the Scots and the French Canada, and the Dutch most of South Africa. The English lost their American colonies, and if they aren't careful they'll lose their other one—Australia. However, the Dominions are out of the hands of the Colonial Office now, and so perhaps the British Commonwealth of Nations will hold together. They'll have to open themselves up, though, if the Commonwealth is going to hold its own with the United States. Personally I believe it will because the British

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somehow know when to shake off their Anglo-Saxonism. They have a very formidable elasticity which you don't begin to have in Germany. It's not surprising you went in so much for making cheap toys: they expressed a great deal of the Teutonic spirit. And the goose-step! The whole of the rest of the world laughs at it, but you poor introverted Germans do genuinely believe that it must be a noble manifestation of the disciplined body because you invented it. So you goose-step through life—your diplomacy, your administration, your organization, your science, your history, your philosophy, even your amusement, it's all goose-stepping. Only in music are you free. For God's sake put this talking-toy of yours back in his box and produce another Goethe to teach you and the rest of the world what civilization means, and what a power for good a German extrovert of genius might be. Or if you must be introverted, then turn your minds into music. And now don't let's talk any more about Germany and Britain. I know you love these islands, and because you do I ask you to forgive me for anything I have said which has hurt your feelings."

"I accept your apology, Mr Ogilvie," the young German said stiffly. "But I think I will please go back in your boat this afternoon. There is a gulf between us which I do not think it is possible to be crossed. I had heard that you were working for the rights of Scotland against England, and I supposed you would sympathize with somebody like me who finds himself oppressed by an inferior race like the Czechs. I am sorry I presumed to make myself a burden to you."

"You didn't make yourself a burden at all, my dear fellow," John assured him. "And I repeat I am sorry to have hurt your feelings."

"Germany has been most understanding with Ireland," Bauer went on. "And I am sure that if Scotland wanted help Germany would give her help. The Germans have a very profound compassion for the nations who are being downtrodden by the English."

"Nobody has tried harder than I have to present the Irish case to her three sisters," said John. "Nobody could feel more warmth than I feel towards Ireland. And if Ireland with Britain standing, don't forget, *between* her and Germany feels that she can afford to indulge in close intercourse with Germany, that is Ireland's own affair. But I would sooner see Scotland decline for ever into provincial obscurity than win back her sovereignty as a nation with

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German help. I do not believe that Germany in her present mood is capable of disinterested action."

"You do not think it was disinterested when Germany has signed a Non-Aggression Pact with Poland for ten years last January? You do not think Adolf Hitler has shown his sincere desire for peace by making the sacrifice to give up all claims to the abominable Corridor?"

"I do not believe that any German statesman has performed a disinterested action in the last two hundred years," John declared emphatically. "I do not know what the object of that Non-Aggression Pact is, but if I were a Pole I should wonder if Colonel Beck had not signed the death-warrant of my country."

"You are so prejudiced, Mr Ogilvie, that how can one discuss the European situation with you? You will not believe in the good intentions of Germany even when the Minister for Foreign Affairs signs his name to a Pact of Non-Aggression."

"And if, say, next year Germany found it convenient to tear up that Pact, would she be violating the code of international honour?" John asked.

"No, because such a Pact could only be annulled by the treacherous behaviour of the Poles. I hope they will not be treacherous, but they are Slavs, and . . ."

"So if they are accused of violating the Pact the German nation will believe it to be true?" John asked.

"Certainly, it would have to be true," the young German affirmed.

"We'll discuss no more politics. You'll change your mind and stay the night on those conditions? I want you to play me some more of those delightful Bohemian songs. I can't give you any Pilsner, but I have some good hock. You'll stay?"

The young German bowed ceremoniously.

"I shall be very pleased, Mr Ogilvie, and we can perhaps talk about the Hebrides which will give me so much pleasure."

"Our Non-Aggression Pact is concluded," said John with a smile.

In the third week of August Padraig and his friend Jack Marsham departed to enjoy a few weeks in Switzerland before going up to Oxford in October. At the end of the month John travelled south.

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He spent a night in Glasgow on the way and called on Archie Beaton that evening.

"Isn't that strange now?" the old man exclaimed. "I've been thinking pretty hard about you all this past week, and wondering whether I wouldn't write and ask you to give me a chance of seeing you."

"I wonder how many centuries of procrastination have been devoted by Highlanders of the West to wondering whether they wouldn't write letters," John laughed.

"Ay, indeed, quite a lot I believe," Archie Beaton agreed, with a brief lacertian twinkle in those leaden-blue eyes. "Yes, I wanted a wee talk with you about the development of Alba Gu Brath." Again that brief lacertian twinkle. "It's about Alasdair MacPhee in particular."

"I haven't heard from him for a long while now," said John.

"He's been brooding on something," Archie went on as he poured out a dram for himself and his guest. "Yes, yes, he wants to bring things to a head, and I think it might be his own head at that. Not to put too fine a point on it, Mr Ogilvie, I've a notion he's considering the effect of putting a bullet into one of the members of the National Government. His present favourites for the target are Sir John Gilmour, the Home Secretary, or Sir Godfrey Collins, the Secretary of State for Scotland. He is also considering another Scotsman, Major Walter Elliot, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries. And he has cast an appraising glance on Mr Ernest Brown, the English member for Leith and Secretary for Mines; and Mr Walter Runciman, the English President of the Board of Trade, has not made at all a favourable impression on our friend Alasdair as laird of the island of Eigg."

"It's a mad idea," John exclaimed. "It will ruin the cause he has at heart."

"I'm afraid I agree with you, Mr Ogilvie," said the old rebel with a sigh. "I'll admit right away that I have no personal interest in the preservation of any of these monuments to industry. None whatsoever. No, indeed. But I have a real interest in the preservation of our young friend, and I think it would be a very great pity for him to throw away his life without the likelihood of any return for the sacrifice."

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"It would be insane," John affirmed. "I must see him and put a stop to this wild scheme."

"Och, there's plenty of time. He has not made up his mind yet."

"But I'm going abroad almost at once for the winter," John said. "I ought to see him before I leave the country."

"There's no hurry. You can depend upon it, Mr Ogilvie, that he will take no action without talking over the project with you. He hasn't even decided on his victim yet. Besides, there's an alternative."

"What's that?"

"I believe the scheme under consideration at the moment is the seizure of Edinburgh Castle."

"They have arms then?"

"Och, they have a few arms. I believe they might make a nuisance of themselves for a day or two. But this country's not going to respond to a nuisance. The English would never have lost Ireland if they'd had the sense to be merciful. But with every one of those young men they shot at intervals they shot away a big big piece of Ireland. They managed the trick better in Scotland. They made death or transportation the penalty for wearing so much as an inch of tartan and then tempted the men of the Highlands into regiments so as to be able to wear their own dress. They knew fine their pride would make them fight well, and so they managed to get these awkward customers killed off by the French and win themselves an empire in the process."

"Don't laugh at these boys too much, Archie," John begged. "They may be goaded into doing something stupid."

"Ach, it's not them. I'm laughing at, it's myself. And I daresay you'll be laughing at yourself in another twenty years just the same way as I am. So much said and so little done," he sighed.

"I wonder if I hadn't better try to get in touch with young MacPhee?" John suggested anxiously.

"No, no. I wouldn't say a word just now if I were you, Mr Ogilvie. I'm sure you'll find he'll take your advice when he has fully made up his own mind that he's in need of it. And it'll be more useful to give him that advice then than now. It will have more effect if he abandons the enterprise when it is complete for action than if he abandoned it now and were left with the notion

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that he was incapable of finishing anything. I just wanted to warn you that there was something in the air, because I did not want you to find that unconsciously you might have encouraged an enterprise of no value at all to the cause you have at heart and of which you would not approve. Don't be changing any of your own plans at all."

John was pensive.

"There's so much they might do without going to any extreme, without the least violence," he said at last.

"Ay, but Alasdair and one or two of them were a bit stung over that Stone of Destiny business. They felt they'd been made to look ridiculous, and it rankled."

"You've not been up to visit my island yet," John chided the old man affectionately.

"I told you my reason, Mr Ogilvie."

"Well, next winter I'm hoping to arrange a symposium and you'll have to take part in it. I was down in Cornwall with my kinsman Henry Pendarves in June, and he has promised to come. You'll enjoy him. And then there's Yves Mazy of whom I've told you, and Liam O'Falvey, and a Welshman called Elwyn Evans who's a don at Jesus College, Oxford—a real Silurian. I've been bragging to them all about you, so you mustn't let me down."

"Well, well, we'll see about it when the time comes near," Archie Beaton promised. "Och, I may be with my forefathers by then. Indeed, I believe I'm with them already. I find contemporary existence is growing very unreal."

When John went round to Belmore House he found Julius and Leonora a little worried by the fact that Sebastian had declared his firm intention of not going back to Cambridge for a second year and of travelling about Europe by himself instead.

"And he's taken to the fiddle," Julius announced. "I discovered that by accident when I came across him playing it in a Hampshire wood. Playing it pretty well, too," he added, with a scowl that was a mixture of disapproval and admiration.

"Well, he must go his own way," said John calmly.

"Oh, my dear, but it's absurd for him to go wandering off by

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himself in Europe," Leonora protested. "He won't be twenty till next February."

"It's hardly reasonable to thwart him from doing something much less revolutionary in the way of educating the young than his father did at the age of fifteen," John pointed out.

Julius made a face.

"I guess there's no answer to that one, Leonora," he said. "Still, with your permission, John, I'll make the mild suggestion that he should wander along down into Italy and put in some time with you. He and Corinna have become great friends."

"I'll be delighted to see him, Julius. We'll probably go right down to Citrano again after a brief look at Rome. I'll show Corinna Florence and Venice and the rest of them in spring."

"I wish I could come along with you," Julius said. "I can't think why I tied myself up with this darned orchestra. Where are you going to stay in Citrano?"

"At the Allegra."

"You are, John? Why, isn't that perfectly lovely!" Leonora exclaimed.

"I wasn't too sure at first when Geoffrey Noel wrote and told me he could get it for me from the beginning of October to the end of March," John said. "I'm not sure it's wise to let the genius of the place assert itself. However, I hadn't the heart not to let Noel think he had performed a miracle by securing the Allegra for us, and I fancy the poor old thing needs a good deal of encouragement in these days. I don't think he's had a very happy time during these last few years. Where is Sebastian? I must give him my invitation."

"He's taken Monica and Corinna to see some film," said Leonora.

"Oh, he's gone with them, has he?" John laughed. "Corinna told me she was going with Monica and Miss Welldon."

"Miss Welldon was going, but Wolfgang had a tummy-ache, and Sebastian offered to deputize so that Monica and Corinna should not be disappointed."

After tea John walked along to Claremount Gardens where he found Miriam Stern just back from one of those visits of hers to two old cousins of her husband's in Highbury. She was looking tired.

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"Are grandmotherly responsibilities weighing upon you?" John asked.

"No, but my two cousins-in-law are," she replied. "They have very little money, and one of them is worried about her health but will *not* see a doctor. I tried to persuade her to come with me to a man in Welbeck Street, but it was no use. The poor old thing dreads what the verdict may be. I wonder why a poor plain old woman clings so desperately to the hope of prolonging a dreary life that she fears even to be told that an operation may be necessary. It won't be so long now, John, before I shall be an aged burden on my relations. When are you off to Italy?"

"In three days' time now. We'll put in two or three nights in Paris. I want to see Arthur now that he is established there as an extremely junior partner of a firm of American lawyers. I'd like him to put in a week if he can round about Christmas in Citrano. He'll be twenty-four next March. I hope the old lady will let him come."

"Is his grandmother so very possessive?" Miriam asked.

"Well, she's over eighty now, and it's natural, isn't it, she should hate parting with him even for a few days? Anyway, I think it's good for Arthur that he should have Mrs Langridge as a responsibility. He'll come into quite a pleasant sum of money when she dies and life should be very easy and pleasant for him. He's developing well, with a good deal more of Athene in him than of poor Wacey Langridge."

"How do he and Corinna get on?"

"Oh, capitally: but of course there's not the difference of age between him and her that made it so much easier for me to delight in Prudence's company when she was Corinna's age."

"She's beginning to grow up quite fast, John."

"Grow up?" he exclaimed. "Why, she won't be fourteen till January."

"I thought she'd grown up very much this year," Miriam Stern said. "I suppose under your system you still have her in the Middle Ages, but I fancy she'll be in the Renaissance sooner than you think, John."

"As a matter of fact I did talk about that with Prudence this summer and she took on the job of tackling the problem. Perhaps Corinna *is* older than Prudence was at the same age. I suppose

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not going to school is largely responsible for that."

"You were old yourself for your age, John, when I first knew you. Oh, ridiculously young too of course, but still . . ." Miriam stopped. "Won't you find it a little poignant at the Villa Allegra without Athene?"

"Not so poignant as I should have found the Torre Saracena if Bodisko had let it to me. But Citrano will be poignant in so many ways. Perhaps it's a mistake to go back there. I wish Julius could have come with me, but he seems to have tied himself up pretty tight with this orchestra at Birfield. However, Sebastian, I hope, will rest for a while during his *wanderjahre* under my roof."

The grandmother smiled to herself.

"I cannot help being a little bit maliciously amused by dear Julius's having the tables turned on him like this. Leonora looks hopefully for a sign of paternal authority, but Julius is powerless. He must let Sebastian do what he wants. And anyway I don't think Sebastian would have gained anything by further scholastic restrictions. After all, he had a year at the Royal College of Music before he went to Cambridge."

"What do you think of this violin-playing—not to mention the oboe, and now I understand the horn and the clarinet as well? I suppose it's all right if he's going to be a really creative musician, but I can't say I like the notion of the piano's being put on one side like this unless he is."

"Who is to prophesy?" she asked. "If he only does as well as Julius he will do very well, but I have a grandmotherly hope that he will do much more than his father. And I do not think that piano-playing like his will ever stay quite on one side."

"Nor do I," John agreed. "And perhaps he will give us such another piano concerto as you first told me of on that night in Cracow. The Brahms Concerto in D minor. I heard it with Elise at the Queen's Hall on the evening after Rose Medlicott's wedding, and I still can conjure up the memory of that Adagio. It might be the thirty-third anniversary of that September evening this very evening. You had just written to me from Poland with the tale of how Julius had found his house. And after the Brahms Concerto I heard what must have been almost the first performance in this country of Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela*. I wonder if I have disappointed that sombre bird."

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"What do you mean, dear John?" she asked.

"Oh, it's a political decision which I shall have to make some time next year, I expect. And I know very well what decision you would advise. You don't believe in the efficacy of shedding blood."

"John!" she exclaimed, and for a moment in the urgency of a sudden apprehension, the years fell from her and she seemed the Miriam of 1901. "John," she repeated sharply, "you are not mad enough to turn your thoughts to blood?"

"No, I expect I shall give prudent counsel. This has not been a year to make blood seem a practical solution of the difficulties of our tormented Europe."

She sank back into her chair, an old woman again.

"Thank God," she murmured.

On the evening before he and Corinna were to fly to Paris and there await Mairi with the luggage, John was at his club before going back to dinner at 57 Church Row when the porter sent a message to the billiards-room that a Mr Yarrow was enquiring for him.

"My most welcome James, where have you sprung from?" John exclaimed when he saw his old friend. "I haven't had any word of you for more than five years."

"I'm just back from Abyssinia. Before that I was in China mostly. How's Athene?"

"Athene died three and a half years ago."

Yarrow dropped his monocle and put on his horn-rimmed spectacles with that gesture he had always used to reveal a perturbation his carefully insouciant manner tried to hide.

"I'm so sorry to hear that," he murmured, and then as always under an emotional surprise began to bite the nails of his long slim fingers.

John took his friend by the arm and gave him a brief history of what had happened to him since they last met in 1929, as they walked along toward the billiards-room.

"And now I'm off to Italy to-morrow. I've taken a villa at Citrano for the winter. I wish you could come out with us. Corinna and I are flying to Le Bourget to-morrow."

"Are you going to fly on to Naples?" Yarrow asked suspiciously.

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"No, no, go on by train from Paris after putting in two or three days there."

"All right, I'll join you in Paris," said Yarrow.

"Can I trust you, James? You'll meet somebody who'll propose a stroll through the Gobi Desert and I shan't see you again for another five or six years. Why don't you fly with us to-morrow? I can't change our plans, or my small daughter would expire of disappointment."

"No, I can't stand that drive to Croydon," said Yarrow. "I'll join you the day after to-morrow."

And thus it was arranged.

John ordered cocktails of tomato-juice and vodka, and asked James what Abyssinia was like.

"Dreadful place. Too many tapeworms and too much beef. The kniphofias are goodish. I think there's going to be trouble with the Italians. In Addis Ababa they're convinced we've made a deal with France to give Italy a free hand."

"Have we?"

"I should think so, probably, with a suitable rake-off for ourselves of course. The Abyssinians haven't forgotten 1926."

"What happened then?"

"Austen Chamberlain and Mussolini got together and as a *quid pro quo* for the support Italy gave us over the Mosul dispute with Turkey they made a deal to recognize British and Italian spheres of interest in Abyssinia, granting Italy the exclusive right to certain concessions. Of course what we wanted and got was a free hand with Lake Tsana to irrigate the Sudan. Well, the French heard about this and were rather fed-up because as members of the Tripartite Pact of 1906 between Britain, France, and Italy they thought they had an interest in Abyssinia themselves and naturally they didn't like the notion of its being divided economically between the other two partners."

"Naturally," John echoed.

"So the Quai d'Orsay croaked at the F.O. and, not finding the F.O.'s response too friendly, the Quai d'Orsay egged on the Abyssinians to appeal to the League of Nations against the British-Italian plot. Austen Chamberlain got up in Parliament and explained that the exclusive right granted to Italian concessions only meant exclusive as far as Britain was concerned. There was no idea of

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bringing any pressure to bear on Abyssinia, which would only be invited to take into friendly consideration the proposals made to her. Of course, it was we who originally encouraged the Italians to go for Abyssinia when we wanted to annoy the French in the 'nineties. We've always kept the French in a continual state of uneasiness like an unfaithful husband. They think John Bull's a *vieux noceur* who can't keep out of the servant's bedroom, like Baron what's-his-name in Balzac's *Cousin Bette*. However, what's more important than whether we do a deal with Italy at France's expense is whether we do a deal with the Germans. I believe we're going to."

"No, no, James. It's not conceivable."

"Isn't it? I think it's more than probable," said Yarrow, taking off his horn-rimmed spectacles and replacing them with the monocle of cynicism.

For Corinna the prospect of flying to Paris was faintly marred by the fact that if the departure had been postponed for about three weeks she would have been able to fly with her Uncle Noll to Mildenhall in Suffolk and there see twenty machines start for the great race to Australia. However, this regret did not survive the thrill of her own flight from Croydon when the moment came.

Mrs Langridge and Arthur were established in an attractive apartment on the left bank of the Seine and Arthur himself was very much the man of law preoccupied with the affairs of American clients in Paris—many of them in search of a divorce obtainable in what they considered more agreeable surroundings than Reno. Old Mrs Langridge seemed frail, and disapproving as she did extremely of divorce, was not exhilarated by the business that was being done by the firm of which Arthur was now a junior partner. John had been doubtful if she would welcome the suggestion that Arthur should revisit the Villa Allegra later on, but she appeared pleased with the idea.

Corinna's greatest excitement in Paris was a *matinée* in which she saw Gabrielle Derozier perform in a new play by Camille Varenne called *La Gourmande*.

Even John had never realized what a really great *comédienne* Gabrielle was. Indeed she had always refused until more recently to let anybody realize it.

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When they went round to her dressing-room at the end of the performance he told her he hoped she would not be annoyed if he said she reminded him sometimes of the great Réjane.

"*Mais au contraire*, my dear John, you make me a great compliment," she declared with evident gratification. "*Et toi, Corinne?*" she asked. "You have enjoyed seeing *ta tante Gabrielle* being so greedy?"

"I laughed so much. And I understood all you said," Corinna avowed.

"*Au pied de la lettre bien entendu.*" She laughed to herself with that deep husky laugh of hers. "*Mais pas sous entendu,*" she added, turning for a moment to John. "It is *ton oncle* who has made this play in revenge, Corinne, because now all his friends who were quite enchanted to hear he is now *oncle* have laughed at him, and they will call him *mon oncle* when he becomes very angry, as he was last February about *l'affaire Stavisky*. So in revenge he has made me a greedy, greedy woman, and says it is the only true picture which anybody has made of me. *Pourtant*, John, it is quite a big success, and really I am very glad, because it is a great thing for an actress after she is forty-five to be able to play comic roles which are intended to be comic. *Oui, c'est mieux comme ça.* And now *écoutez*, I have ordered a delicious little dinner which we will eat in my dressing-room between the two performances. Camille will be here in a half-hour. And I will rest *en négligé.*"

John explained that James Yarrow and Arthur were waiting for them in the foyer.

"*Qu'ils viennent! Qu'ils viennent,*" she insisted. "We have plenty of room for a dinner of six in this room where we are now. You go, John, and fetch Arthur who is already a friend of mine, and this other friend of yours. *Corinne, viens avec moi* to where I dress myself. And I will take off my *maquillage* and put on my *négligé*. John, my dear, you must not mind that everything is cold, because it was not possible to have a really good hot dinner. But there is a beautiful game-pie and plenty of oysters—*marennnes* and *belons* both, and we shall drink, a Chambertin of, I think, '28. And you will have some very good Armagnac afterwards and Corinne shall have a tiny, tiny little glass of *crème de cacao*, and I will have just nothing, because I must act again to-night."

So John went off to fetch James Yarrow and Arthur. Soon

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Camille Varenne arrived, and it was a most delicious cold dinner, which lasted until it was time for Gabrielle to be quiet for half an hour and get ready for the evening performance.

Gabrielle took John aside when the farewells were being said, and murmured to him, her grey-green eyes on Corinna.

"She was a very pretty little girl, John, last year. She is now a beautiful girl. *Oui, elle est encore petite, mais . . .* last year her complexion was like the peach-blossom, but now it is more alluring. It is like almond-blossom. *Les fleurs d'amande sont précoces. Prenez-vous garde, mon vieil ami.*"

The next night they were at the Gare de Lyon just before eight. John and James Yarrow were in one *wagon-lit* . . . Corinna and Mairi were in another . . . down through France in the darkness . . . Chambéry . . . the long Mont Cenis tunnel . . . Fascist efficiency very much to the fore at Modane. . . .

"I can't stand these blackbeetles," James observed. "A five-lira note procured all the attention you wanted once upon a time. Now you pay fifty to one of these blackbeetles and get no attention at all."

. . . Turin, with twenty minutes' wait, which gave one time to drink vermouth in its perfection . . . Genoa, massed in coloured tiers above the sparkling Mediterranean . . . the countless tunnels of the Riviera di Levante, with silver strands between . . . dawn over the Campagna, and the broken aqueducts and a film of green grass beginning to spring again after the first autumnal drench, and the blue Alban hills, and the long, slow, fascinating circuit of Rome's back-gardens, and at last the city herself in the topaz-gleams of a morning at September's end. After a week of classic sightseeing John decided to send the luggage on with a courier and to drive by car from Rome to Citrano. In the hotel smoking-room he had found an English novel published some years earlier in which he had read some pages about Monte Cassino and he thought he should like to give Corinna a pictorial compendium of the historical times through which he had already taken her and of those through which he would presently be travelling:

Mark left behind the squalid and noisy little town of Cassino or San Germano which lies in the shadow of that venerable mountain whose summit is capped with the build-

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ings of the monastery as inevitably as Vesuvius is haunted by its cloud of vapour. He had rejected the idea of driving up by the modern carriage road, preferring to ascend on foot by the ancient mule-track so that he might follow as it were the natural curve of the progress of European civilization, for Monte Cassino is the very abstract of history in the external evidence it offers of what man was and is and may be, and the very essence of humanity in the way it shows the activity of evil transformed to produce the activity of good, and turned back sometimes toward evil, but always by the grace and mercy of Almighty God rescued finally for good.

The classic view widened beneath Mark's feet. Although he could not name the famous mountains and cities he beheld, it affected him like the golden timelessness of a landscape by Claude. This was the season when the Italian harvest goes rioting to a prodigal culmination. The corn between the olive-trees was already yellowing; the cherries were flushed; the scent of the vine-flowers was heavy on the air. And yet somehow it was still spring. The drouthy cicalas had not yet filled the orchards with their fritiniency, so that he still heard the murmur of bees, and listened to the mountain-thrush singing and saw him flash his black-and-azure plumes among the boulders on either side of the track. Mark pressed on. A Gothic castle poised upon a peak overhanging San Germano on the farther side: the remains of a Roman amphitheatre: a tomb of measureless antiquity: a grove of primeval holm-oaks left here by St Benedict to mark where once Venus was worshipped in their shadow: an Austrian fort: a modern carriage road: a wooden cross, and on the rock beneath it the print of St Benedict's knees where he knelt to pray God to grant him strength to drive away from this mountain Apollo and Venus, the demons to whom sacrifices were still offered here: a line of cyclopean walls, the relics of some Pelasgian citadel older even than that tomb: the great abbey, with its innumerable small windows and austere façade, rising from terraced groves and gardens: a Roman gate-tower for entrance, the same under which Benedict had passed coming from Subiaco over thirteen hundred years ago and in the upper storey of which he had made his cell: all these outward signs he beheld.

Mark had not expected from the severity of the outer walls to find within their enclosure that light and lovely *cortile* of Bramante breathing the spirit of the Renaissance. St Benedict had thrown down the altar of Apollo and replaced it with

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one to St John the Baptist. Fragments of the old pagan marble were still to be seen; but the Apollo thus humiliated was a debased deity. What had been worth while in his worship once had surely been exquisitely revived in this *cortile*. Might not even Dante have thought so?

*Quel mont, a cui Cassino è nella costa,
Fu frequentato già in su la cima
Dalla gente ingannata e mal disposta.
Ed io son quel che su vi portai prima
Lo nome di colui che 'n terra addusse
La verità, che tanto ci sublima;
E tanta grazia sovra me rilusse
Ch' io ritrassi le ville circostanti
Dall'empio culto che 'l mondo sedusse.*

But when Mark first saw Bernini's florid basilica with its cherubs and draperies, its roses and garlands and gilt, he began to wonder if Dante might not have been scandalized as much by it as by the thought of the deceived worshippers who once came here to consult the fraudulent oracle. And might not Benedict himself have rejoiced that his bones should lie in Fleury on the Loire, counting the cherubs of Bernini's basilica worse than the Lombard hordes which had overrun his mountain and driven him forth, heresy though it were to whisper here one's belief that the bones of the holy father no longer reposed in their first tomb? But when Mark saw the crypt decorated by the German monks of Beuron and heard the exclamations of outraged Italian taste, he began to apprehend that immense unity in diversity of the Benedictine Order. Each congregation might seem a household, but each household was indeed a congregation. St Gregory said that Benedict beheld God and in that vision of God beheld the whole world. St Thomas was not able to accept this; but Mark, gazing out across Campania from the Loggia del Paradiso, saw Aquino far down below at his feet, and he believed that St Benedict did behold that light which is the Creator and in that light the whole world as if within a single ray of the sun; yes, the whole world—spatially and temporally, the length and depth and breadth of it, the beginning and the end. Such a vision was almost necessary to explain the perseverance of the mighty patriarch, for the age in which he lived must have seemed irreclaimably corrupt and inextricably confused. The

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night of barbarism was settling down upon Europe with nothing to illumine its darkness except the bloody lightnings of war or the ashen fires of pestilence and famine. Christianity handed over to the rabid wolf of Arianism seemed incapable of surviving the persecution of the Vandal, the Goth, and the Visigoth. Art, literature, morality, law, and justice overwhelmed: heresies and schisms rife: feeble popes under the heels of brutal princes. This was the world from which the young patrician fled in order to regain it for God, not by fantastic austerities, but by work and prayer, by clothing the naked and healing the sick, by relieving debtors and helping the afflicted, by cherishing the poor and entertaining travellers, and by burying the dead. He and his followers devoted themselves to sustaining a normal Christianity as laymen, not as priests. They preserved the continuity of the Christian tradition, and in doing so they preserved all that man had won in his upward struggle. Well did Urban VIII say that Benedict deserved while yet in this mortal life to behold God Himself, and in God all that was below Him. Mark wondered if anybody had called Benedict the second Noah, or likened Monte Cassino to Ararat and the Abbey resting on its summit to the Ark, for compared with this the League of Nations on the shores of Geneva was no more than a crazy barge which the first small flood would submerge.

Although Mark appreciated the Abbot's intention in advising him to go to Monte Cassino, he could not help saying to himself that it told him nothing he did not know already of the Catholic idea, and very little that he did not know already of the Catholic reality. Before he left the monastery and plunged down again toward the lowlands of Campania, he came upon an inscription carved upon a solitary rock:

*O Padre nostro che sei nei cieli affratella a noi l' Inghilterra
nella unità della Fede.*

Our Father Who art in Heaven, make England a brother of ours in the unity of the Faith.

"James," he said, "your knowledge is encyclopaedic. Why would anybody carve on a rock at Monte Cassino that prayer?" He showed him the passage in the book.

"I suppose because Gladstone saved the monastery for the monks when the Piedmontese Government was going to secularize it some-

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time at the end of the 'sixties. The old boy was invited to stay with the monks, and they still have his picture hanging in the refectory, I believe."

"He was a marvellous man, Gladstone," John reflected. "What a difference to Europe it might have made if he could have gone on living! His mind was growing younger and wiser all the time—an unusual combination. When one comes to think of it, any true love for the British to be found in Europe is usually traceable back to some act of generous common sense by Gladstone."

"Yes, I can't say I relish agreeing with you about that, John, but I believe you're right. He was an educated European statesman and most of the Prime Ministers since have been partially-educated, untravelled, insular politicians," said James.

A couple of days after this conversation they set out from Rome in a big Lancia car to Citrano.

"We won't explore the whole place, will we?" James asked a little apprehensively when they were passing through the tunnel under the old Roman gate in which St Benedict was believed to have had his cell at Monte Cassino.

"No, no," said John, "we'll just look at the view from the Loggia del Paradiso."

They climbed the broad low steps beyond the tunnel and passed through the sculptured portal at the top into the exquisite *cortile* of Bramante, surrounded on three sides by classic arcades, in the middle a great canopied well and on the fourth side the *Scala Regia* at least a hundred feet wide leading to Bernini's florid basilica. Then they ascended to the *loggia* above the arcades and pored upon the mighty view in the golden haze of the October sunshine.

"Wouldn't it be lovely to fly over here?" Corinna sighed.

James Yarrow shook his head.

"Isn't this airy terra firma enough for you?" he asked.

"But it would be more lovely still if one was flying above it, Uncle James," she insisted.

Yarrow took off his glasses and put in his monocle.

"Listen, you disgusting child," he said severely. "There are certain things I will not stand, and one of them is to be called 'Uncle James'. Either Mr Yarrow or preferably plain James. I recognize your amicable intentions in calling me Uncle James, but

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I warn you that if you do it again you will raise an impenetrable barrier between us for ever."

"All right. I'll call you 'James'," Corinna said, looking at him.

"And don't make eyes at me," James Yarrow continued. "I'm as completely proof against female wiles as a dead Benedictine monk."

"Look, Corinna, you see that little town down there," said John. "That's Aquino where St Thomas lived at the end of his life."

"She probably calls him Uncle Tom," James Yarrow commented.

"Oh no, no, Mr Yarrow," Mairi interposed earnestly, with a shocked expression. "She would never be doing that to a holy saint."

"St Thomas Aquinas was the Angelic Doctor," Corinna announced.

"And what was Uncle Ben?" Yarrow asked.

"Oh, James, you are bad. I don't call saints 'uncle'."

"Don't listen to him, Corinna," said her father. "He's impossible. You sit here, James. I'm going to give Corinna and Mairi a hurried glimpse of the basilica, and St Benedict's tomb, and the crypt."

An hour later they were on the road to Naples, where they stayed the night so that Corinna could see Pompeii next day. James was strongly against the ascent of Vesuvius. Then the noisy drive round the Parthenopean Bay . . . and the lemon-groves of Sorrento . . . and the climb up to the ridge to stand for a while beside the car and look before at the silver bay of Salerno, behind at the pale azure of the bay of Naples . . . and then down into Citrano crowded now with new hotels and exasperatingly clean under the restless broom of the Fascist Podestà . . . and then the walk along the narrow cobbled lane that led to the Villa Allegra where, standing between the two great terra-cotta oil-jars on either side of the door, they saw a shrivelled old man in a brown tweed suit that was much too big for him. With a start of surprise John realized that it was Geoffrey Noel on the look-out to welcome them.

"My dear Ogilvie—m-m—my dear John—m-m-m-m—this is really a great delight," he hummed, dancing and wriggling with shyness, but not quite so fast as once upon a time. "And this is Mairi—m-m—how d'ye do? . . . and Yarrow. I am so glad to see you,"

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he gulped. "And Corinna!" He shook hands with embarrassed formality, and then as they all went into the house he took John's arm and squeezed it. "My dear man, I wish there was somebody else with you—m-m-m—*tempus edax rerum, nam quod fuit ante relictum est*—m-m—I think I've tied two of my tags together . . . what a lovely child, though . . . she must be a wonderful consolation. . . . I do hope you'll find everything quite comfortable. . . ."

"Father, is that the Torre Saracena?" Corinna was calling from the terrace.

"Yes, that's the Torre Saracena," John answered, looking down across the rosemary to his old house. "How the cypresses have grown," he said to Noel. "Poor Wacey Langridge planted them in 1915—all but twenty years ago. How they've grown!"

"Do you think we'll be able to go and see the Tower?" Corinna asked eagerly.

Noel shook his head.

"I doubt it. The place is boarded up and nobody in Citrano is entrusted with the keys. Bodisko hasn't been near the place for two years," he told John. "You'll find it greatly changed. I play all the time with the idea of leaving it and going to live in France, but—m-m-m—there are difficulties of one kind and another. I've given up my *villino* as you know. Yes, I just have one room with quite a pleasant *terrazza* . . . the people who own the house are not bad . . . but I'm growing very tired of Citrano . . . it's not what it was since it became fashionable"—he lowered his voice—"and really, Ogilvie, you know these Fascists are dreadful . . . they are really dreadful . . . one's life is simply not one's own . . . everybody is gone except me . . . I missed even the Heighington when she died . . . two years ago . . . my greatest pleasure now is go and see old Fofò who lives about a mile away on the Amalfi side . . . with olives and vines and a few orange- and lemon-trees . . . I don't know why I call him old Fofò . . . he's younger than I am . . . oh dear, what a long time ago to those golden days before the war . . . *et ego in Arcadia*. . . ." He broke off between a gulp and a sigh.

"We must make an expedition before the autumn grows much older," said John.

"Do you know I haven't been there since that time we went with young Mario Aprili—m-m-m—what a handsome creature he was—m-m—and your young sister and Arthur and Leonora Stern,

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and that was . . . well, it must be twelve years ago."

"It was in March 1922," said John. "We didn't go by boat as we did in June 1914. We drove in cars and walked along the cliff-path to the Punta from Nerano. I think we can go by boat this time. The weather seems perfectly settled. It's just the treat I want for my fifty-second birthday."

After a day of sea and sun along the base of the mighty limestone cliffs between Citrano and Cantone the boat drew in beside the rough jetty of rocks close to the tumble-down *palazzo* at the end of the dark sand of the Marina. The family of fisher-folk welcomed the party warmly, but there was nobody left who remembered that visit of twenty years ago. The patriarch and matriarch were both dead. However, the present head of the family, who was about forty-five, insisted the family bedroom should be evacuated for Corinna and Mairi; John, James Yarrow, and Geoffrey Noel were to sleep on pallets of straw in a barrack of a room used for storing anything from old fishing-nets to jars of oil.

"Isn't it beautiful?" Mairi murmured, looking at the great bare room with its high domed ceiling and the little pious chromolithographs upon the whitewashed walls. She had been delighted to find a portrait of Pope Pius X, the very same as used to hang in the living-room of her home in Moidart when she was a child. The beds were high and hard, but the coverlets were snowy white and the whole room, faintly perfumed by the sea-wind, had the trim cleanliness of shipboard. The windows looked westward along the dark sandy beach below a slope densely planted with olives to the rocky bulk of Monte San Costanzo.

The next day they took the rough path round the base of the mountain to reach the Punta and picnic once again among the debris of the great Temple of Minerva. There was no fragrant crimson pease-blossom at this time of the year, but the spurges were sprouting with vivid green, and the grass was springing again, so that here on this sea-girt promontory where no dishevelled vines were visible October was forgotten in what seemed a vernal awakening of the sunburnt earth.

Corinna was excited by the prospect of digging up one of the little terra-cotta heads of Minerva that were still to be found among the

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debris, souvenirs of the goddess that used to be sold to the trippers and pilgrims of nearly two thousand years ago. She now possessed as one of her greatest treasures the head that her father had once found here on that June day in 1914 and presented to her mother.

"Oh, do help me to look, James," she begged.

"Not on your life," he said, leaning back against a limestone boulder. "If you think I'm going to scratch about like a hen after that appalling walk you're mistaken, my girl. I'm going to sit quietly here till it's time to eat our lunch. You're a most unnatural child. First you want me to fly and then you want me to burrow underground. You'll suggest bathing next."

"Well, I'd like to," she said. "Only I haven't got a bathing-dress."

"What's that matter?"

"But it does matter. I couldn't bathe with nothing on, could I, Mairi?"

"Indeed, I would think not," exclaimed Mairi in horror.

"All right, you buzz off and look for Minerva. 'I'm going to have a doze,'" James Yarrow proclaimed.

Geoffrey Noel was leaning back against another boulder and gazing across the *bocca* to the island of Capri three miles away.

"I don't suppose I shall ever be so close to Capri again," he said to John. "It's a queer feeling, Ogilvie, when every place you see you ask yourself if you're seeing it for the last time."

"That's being very morbid," John chided.

"I feel quite exhausted by our walk," Noel puffed. "I'm getting old. And I'm not getting old in the way I should like to grow old. Yes, like Curius Dentatus I would rather be dead than live as a dead man—m-m-m—and that is just what I'm doing, Ogilvie. Vanessa has made it only too clear to me that I am a useless appendage. I've only myself to thank. I should never have married her. And of course I've been accepting an allowance from her for nearly thirty years now. I had a hope once that I might be able to earn my living by writing, and when we parted company I never expected to be accepting her bounty for so long. I have allowed myself to drift into this position of complete dependence. I've drifted all my life."

"Is your wife sending you the money regularly?" John asked.

"She only sends half of what she used to send, and living is really

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three times as much as it used to be. But I don't want to bring a cloud into this benign sky. I can't tell you what a pleasure it is to have you to talk to, my dear fellow. My life here now is definitely lonely—very lonely. Citrano is for me a place of ghosts. I came there first in 1895—just on forty years ago. England was impossible after the Oscar Wilde affair. I couldn't endure it any longer. The Philistines had triumphed. And now since this odious Fascist régime the Philistines have triumphed in Italy. There's a dreadful little Podestà. A petty tyrant. Socially ambitious, vulgar, corrupt. I have to be very careful. I might be expelled. And where would I go? At least a few outward signs of the old Citrano are left. I can imagine old friends in the places where I used to see them. But if I went now to live in a strange place, the very rocks as well as the faces would be unfamiliar. So I cling to my Citrano rocks and sea. . . ." He gazed from clouded eyes beyond the Tyrrhenian. "But this dirge is inexcusable," he gulped. "Dear me, I wish I could find one of these Minerva heads."

He scratched with his stick in the herbage, and suddenly bent over in excitement.

"I believe I have found a lachrymatory. Yes, it is. It is!" He picked up a little glass vial enamelled by time with a rainbow sheen which, when the dust had been wiped from it, gleamed in the mellow sunlight. "Corinna, Corinna!" Noel called. "I've found something for you."

She came running.

"Another head of Minerva?"

"No, but a Roman lachrymatory."

"What is that?"

"A little glass vial in which the old Romans used to decant their tears," Noel explained.

"Good gracious!" Corinna commented. "Did they cork them in?"

"They sealed them up somehow. Well, here's something as old as your head of Minerva."

"Is it for me? Don't you want it, Mr Noel? Are you sure you can spare it?" Corinna asked.

"I've no tears left to shed," he told her.

"No, I didn't think you'd want to put your tears in it," she

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explained. "But it's so lovely. I thought you'd like to look at it."

"I'd like much better to think you'd like to look at it, and always with a smile."

He offered her the lachrymatory, and thanking him for the gift she wrapped it up in her handkerchief.

"I've given up teasing myself over epigrams, Ogilvie," Noel confided to him presently. "But really I think I'll have to try to work on one about this. Something about being remembered by nothing except an empty lachrymatory—m-m-m—in point of fact I believe the wise men nowadays are doubtful whether these little glass and alabaster vials found in Roman tombs have anything to do with tears, but I've never heard of an alternative explanation."

"Well, whether it was once filled with tears or not," John assured his old friend, "she will always remember who gave her that little iridescent glass vial."

"I can't pretend the thought does not give me pleasure," the donor mumbled.

That evening when they were back at Cantone two of the sons came down from Nerano with news over the radio that the King of Yugoslavia and the French Foreign Minister had been assassinated at Marseilles.

"And it was here that we heard of the assassination of the Archduke at Serajevo which was the signal for the war," John exclaimed. "An odd, rather uncomfortable coincidence."

"And this is the signal for another war," James Yarrow declared.

"No, no, James," John protested.

Later when they were wandering up and down in the darkness by the edge of the sea, John asked his friend what he had meant by his comment.

"I'm perfectly sure Mussolini is responsible for this assassination," James said. "He wants Alexander out of the way, to encourage internal strife in Yugoslavia."

"You've got Mussolini on the brain. I think it's what the radio says it was—the act of Croat terrorists," John insisted.

"It's a very convenient moment to be rid of Alexander. And of Barthou also if it comes to that."

"What a year of blood this has been!" John ejaculated.

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"Oh, the blood shed this year is merely the first isolated drops that precede a deluge," James prophesied.

Don Alfonso Massa's rustic retreat had been inherited through Donna Assunta, his wife, from old Gargiulo who had left his wine-shop in the Piazza to be transformed by his enterprising son-in-law into the Caffè Umberto Primo, known for so long as Fofò's. In due course old Gargiulo had died and Don Alfonso had retired in his turn after selling the Caffè at a swingeing price to newcomers. When John and James Yarrow went up to call on him that October day he had been installed for all but two months of twelve years in an ancient farmhouse with a great arcaded *loggia* in front of it from which one looked over vines and olives across the corniche road to the silver expanse of the Salernian Gulf. In this *loggia* old Gargiulo had rejoiced in the ten grandchildren with which Assunta had presented him, and here now Fofò, as huge as some great Buddha, sat rejoicing in grandchildren more numerous. Margherita, Caterina, Concetta, and the rest of his daughters were all married. Two of his sons worked the vineyards and the olive-yards: the other three were doing well for themselves in various hotels.

"I amma so glad to see you, *signore*," he wheezed as he shook hands with John. "Assunta! Assunta!"

Donna Assunta came from within to give John an emotional greeting.

"*Sempre più giovine!*" she exclaimed. "*Che piacere di rivedere il nostro caro signore! Comè sono contenta!*"

And all that was visible of Fofò's currant eyes in that roly-poly face of his flashed his own welcome.

"I speaka very bad now the English. I manka the practice for speak it. Now always we have Italian peoples in Citrano, *grazie infinite al nostro Duce illustrissimo!*"

"Bada! bada, Alfonso," his wife begged.

"I musta to be careful in my own house," he turned with a chuckle to observe to his two guests. There followed a seismic shrug of his shoulders. "*Ecco il fascismo! È una bellezza, evvero?* I cannotta to say a word to my own house because always there are . . ." He seized the top of one of his ears and pulled it forward to indicate the eavesdroppers that were nowadays ubiquitous. "*Però,*"

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he now put a forefinger to what was left of his nose by the encroaching mass of his cheeks in order to prepare his visitors for a demonstration of his own cunning, "*però*, I have made myself a *belvedere* to the garden where we can talk without hears. *Andiamo*."

He led the way through the bosky walled garden of the farmhouse where the yellowing leaves of the big cherry-trees were flecked with crimson and the chestnuts were turning to a golden brown. Soon the pear-trees and the peach-trees would be stripped bare and the ashen boughs of the figs contort themselves in their nakedness. The brief winter was at hand.

Half-way along the garden they reached a kind of large stucco shell open to the south, on either side of which were two mandarin-orange-trees whose small dark-green lustrous leaves cradled the fruit that would be full ripe by Christmas. On the tiled floor of the *belvedere* stood a table and about half a dozen chairs.

"Soon we can be too cold to sit here," said Fofò. "But to-day I think it is warm for drink a little wine and have a talk where nobody is hearing what we say."

They seated themselves and presently a fourteen-year-old granddaughter, Gelsomina, arrived with the glasses and bottles of their host's own Citrano, both red and white.

"*Ben arrivati, signori*," Fofò said, raising his glass. "*Salute!*"

"*Salute*," John and James echoed, and drank deep of the wine.

"And so you like Fascism, Don Alfonso?" James Yarrow asked.

"For Fascism it is good. *Affatto*, it is very good. *Per l'Italia . . .*" Fofò finished with such a gargantuan sigh that it seemed impossible even for that mass of flesh to exhale so much air without showing any apparent sign of deflation.

"For Italy it is not quite so good, eh?" John asked.

"It is an error," Fofò declared. "Excuse to me, please, I must speak in Italian. My English now is all *sotto sopra*. For Verona Fascism may be good. For Firenze perhaps it may even be good. For Piemonte it may also be good. I do not know. In any case the Piemontesi are purely egotistical. But for Roma and Napoli and Sicilia and all the Meridionale it is a disaster, as to speak quite frankly I think all the *risorgimento* was a disaster. We are an Italia amalgamated, but we are not an Italia united. We Napolitani had the Bourbons. We wanted to keep the Bourbons.

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They understood better what we wanted than these greedy Piemontesi. We wanted ourselves. They wanted themselves. It is well. Yes, but they wanted us as well as themselves. That was not so good. *Avanti Savoia! Avanti Savoia!* We don't want to hear that in Campania or La Puglia or Sicilia. We want to hear *Avanti Napoli, Avanti Bari, Avanti Palermo*. So things are going always bad. Why do I call my Caffè Umberto Primo? Because when I first made it larger, *signore*, Umberto Primo was just killed. The imbeciles thought I called it by his name because I was sorry. Quite otherwise. I called it by his name because I was very glad in my heart. Then came Giolitti and at last we had a man of sense. Giolitti saw that for Italy to prosper she must stay quiet. Giolitti did not want for us to go into the war. He was right. The interventionists made a great bawling all over the country, and that animal of a Mussolini, that mandril, to do himself good helped to bring Italy into the war. It was madness. What do we gain from it? Merely a million Italian dead, and to be treated afterwards as if we have done nothing. Then Giolitti is called back to lead the Government. It is too late. He is old. He sees he must contend with madmen, and he retires. It is all confusion and so Mussolini gets the power. And this I tell you. He will ruin Italy before he has finished. We are not ancient Romans. We can be quite content to be Italians. We do not want to be ancient Romans. It makes me sick at the stomach to be an ancient Roman. If I am living two thousand years ago, yes, I will be an ancient Roman with great pleasure." He lowered his voice. "That assassination at Marseilles. Do you think that is good? *Signori*, it is very bad. Perhaps it is the Hungarians who have helped the Croats to make it. Perhaps it is also Mussolini who has helped the Croats to make it."

"What did I tell you?" James Yarrow reminded John.

"Mussolini knows when to kill," Don Alfonso continued. "He killed General Tellini in Albania to make trouble for the Greeks. He wants so much to be an ancient Roman himself that he is sure the Greeks must want to be ancient Greeks. He is a madman full of bad dreams.

*Giovinezza, giovinezza,
Primavera di beltà.*

Primavera di niente! One swallow does not make a spring," he

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declared indignantly.

*Nel Fascismo è la salvezza
Della nostra libertà.*

"Our liberty? Fascism will save our liberty?" Don Alfonso demanded in rhetorical wrath, with an expectoration that hit the tiled floor with an audible smack. "I have never been such a slave in my life as I have been with twelve years of this accursed Fascism. It is true I am free compared with many, because I do not choose to be sent to the Lipari Islands or the Ponza Islands by talking too much. I eat well. I drink well. I sleep well. I have my wine and my oil and very good *cacciavalle* cheeses. I can sit here and look at the sea in contentment. The air is fresh and healthy. My children began by being enthusiastic Fascists. I said nothing. To-day the madness has passed. Still I say nothing. But when I heard what had happened at Marseilles a terrible weight lay upon my spirit. I asked what were the dreams of that man who gazes so darkly across the Adriatic."

"I think he's gazing across the Tyrrhenian now toward Africa," James Yarrow said. "I've just come back from Abyssinia."

"Ah, you have? They are bad people, I think."

"Not so bad as all that," Yarrow replied. "But I don't know why you insisted on their joining the League of Nations. That was one of Mussolini's bright ideas."

"I can say nothing about Abyssinia," Fofu muttered as he poured out more glasses of wine. "I can say only that if Mussolini has brought the Abyssinians into the League of Nations it will be for another of his dreams." Then he turned to John, "Have you talked yet with the Podestà?"

"I had a few words with him at the Excelsior," John replied. "He didn't attract me greatly. I thought him pretentious."

"He is a very strong Fascist," said Fofu.

"So I gathered, but I didn't feel up to a lecture, so I told him I had ceased to take any interest in Fascism since they beat up Vecchione at the Villa Marigold."

Fofu chuckled to himself.

"He was the leader of that affair. He would have fancied you were giving him a prick."

"I thought he seemed rather disconcerted," John said. "I'm glad I touched him on the raw."

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"He is typical of the kind of gangster who represents Fascism in small towns everywhere. *La Camorra! La Maffia!*" Fofò exclaimed. "The worst *camorrista*, the worst *maffioso* was an angel of God compared with men like our Podestà. All the same, it is perhaps a pity that you treated him so contemptuously."

"What can he do to me?" John asked indifferently.

"Not to you, *signore mio*, but to a friend of yours. Out of spite he could make it very unpleasant for Signor Noel. He might have him expelled from Citrano. There has been talk of it once or twice. And now that Don Augusto and Don Rocco are no longer here I am very much alone in what I can do to help old friends."

"But is he still indiscreet?"

"Ah, *poverino*," Fofò sighed as he filled the glasses again. "When one is made like that . . ." He made the Neapolitan grimace which signifies that a state of affairs is incurable.

"Do you think I should give him a hint to be more cautious?" John asked.

"It would be more practical to make yourself agreeable to the Podestà next time you meet him. He is easily flattered."

"I'll take your advice," John promised.

They sat talking with Fofò for another half an hour and then walked back to Citrano.

"I wonder what *did* go wrong with Fascism, James," John said presently.

"I don't think anything went wrong with it," Yarrow replied. "It was never right."

"I don't agree, James. The original impulse was a good one. It *was* an assertion of youth and vitality and humanity. I remember the way it caught hold of Arthur when he was a boy. And young Mario Aprili whom you never saw was as far removed from creatures like this horrid little parvenu Podestà as a Piero della Francesca angel from a surrealist portrait."

"A Piero della Francesca angel is farther removed from reality than some surrealist portraits."

"I'm not going to turn aside to argue that. I merely register disagreement," said John. "I still think that if the original impulse of Fascism had retained its order it might have saved the crash."

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"About as effectively as Henry V's expedition to France succeeded in counterbalancing the activity of the Lollards," James retorted. "Whatever the original impulse may have been, John, the man who exploited it was this paranoiac Mussolini. And an impulse that turns to paranoia to express itself is pretty low down in the psychological scale. The only result has been to turn the Italians into a nation of paranoiacs. They'll be setting out against the Negus of Abyssinia presently under the belief that they are being led by Scipio against Hannibal. The impulse which made the *risorgimento* was a good impulse, but that went bad on them in the same way. They were just as incapable of responding to Mazzini's humanitarian vision as to any other vision since. They were no better qualified to be the beating heart of nineteenth-century liberalism than they are to be the beating heart of twentieth-century . . ." He paused.

"Twentieth-century what?" John pressed.

"Well, rationalism is the word I was going to use, but not with its usual signification. I mean the rationalism which we try to express by that foul word rationalization—the adjustment of human life to mechanical progress, the substitution of classic order for romantic individualism. Man went ahead of other mammals in the struggle to survive by centralizing his nervous system. The Italians obviously haven't got it in them to achieve another Renaissance. It's clear to me that in a very short time they will be playing second fiddle to the Germans. It's the Germans we've got to worry about. You were inclined at one time to think that something could be made of the Germans. You might as well look back sentimentally to that state of your mind as to your early hopes of Fascism."

"I did grow despondent about our own stupidity," John admitted. "I did for a while believe that, if the Germans had been handled differently at Versailles and after, they might have turned over a new leaf. Even now sometimes I wonder if we missed a great opportunity."

"We did miss a great opportunity," Yarrow declared.

"You think so?"

"Yes, we missed a great opportunity to jump on the Germans so hard as to make them unrecognizable as Germans either to themselves or anybody else. And the next great opportunity we're

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going to miss is to convince the Russians that between us we could keep Europe and Asia in order. But what's the good of talking like this, John? You and I are living in one of those epochs which try to imitate the Flood. We're as much capable of useful constructive or destructive criticism as a couple of twigs in a cataract. The whole of mankind is experiencing another deluge, and even Ararats like Monte Cassino look pretty insecure in these days. Yes, we're all sweeping along on one of those infernal tidal streams in which evolution indulges at intervals, and here and there we catch sight of a log sweeping along with the rest of the twigs and mistake it for a great man."

The weather turned to a drench of rain in November. John invited the Podestà and Geoffrey Noel to lunch. The latter sent word that his rheumatism was active and begged to be excused; but the Podestà and his wife accepted.

Count Monreale was one of those shrivelled Mediterranean quasi-aristocrats whose minds are like fine-pointed rusty nibs and whose blue blood has turned to thin blackish ink. His name suggested a Maltese origin for his family, but he called himself a Neapolitan. His wife was a large woman walking with obviously extreme discomfort in shoes that were much too tight for her.

The narrow cobbled way between ferny walls which led from the carriage road to the Villa Allegra had evidently tested her endurance.

"*Pazienza*," her husband counselled, rubbing his hands. "Patience. Everything cannot be done in a few minutes. We shall extend the *strada carrozzabile* at a suitable opportunity, Signor Ogilvie."

"Oh, if I were the owner of the Allegra," John said, "I should prefer to keep the narrow approach. Even fifteen years ago when I lived at the Torre Saracena there was a project to extend the carriage road, and carry it right down to the beach, and I was glad when the old *municipio* were frightened off the scheme by the expense of it."

"Ah, *quello municipio*," commented Count Monreale, with a sour and contemptuous smile that revealed two rows of ridged yellow teeth.

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John saw a chance for a little flattery, and for the sake of Geoffrey Noel he took advantage of it.

"It is clear that the abolition of the old *municipio* and the centralization of local government in the hands of one Podestà has speeded up the development of Citrano in every direction," he assured the Count, who inclined his head to acknowledge the compliment paid to himself as the representative of the glories of Fascism and as an extremely competent administrator.

"We have had our difficulties in Citrano. However as a Neapolitan I understand the southern Italian character and perhaps I am able to be of more use than an administrator from *alta Italia*." He lathered from his hands any suggestion of boastfulness in making such a claim for his own ability.

Nobody like a Highlander, an Irishman, a Neapolitan, or a Greek for exploiting the weaknesses of his own countrymen if he finds himself in a position to do so, John thought bitterly, but he still flattered the Podestà for a particular purpose.

"I am astounded at the improvements you have made, Count," he said. "I hardly recognized the place after an absence of twelve years."

"*Sempre avanti, avanti, avanti*," said the Podestà with unctuous humility. "The eye of the Duce is everywhere. Where he leads we follow. I believe you have a great admiration for him in England?"

"Except in Liberal circles," John said.

"These Liberals," the Podestà muttered distastefully. "Ah, Signor Ogilvie, what we have suffered from these enemies of human progress. And the Bolsheviks. Citrano was a centre for their detestable propaganda. I am proud to tell you that there is not a single Russian left in Citrano. It was evident to me very soon that Citrano could never become a bathing-resort of the first class until there was not a single Russian left. You cannot have a bathing-resort for chic society when round every rock you find Russians lying about in the sun . . . *scusi, Signor Ogilvie, ma nudi . . . nudissimi*. . . It was necessary to act with sternness and at last every Russian has been expelled for making Bolshevik propaganda."

"Even Ostáпов?" asked John, who had missed his old friend at the Villa Dioniso, which was now the summer residence of a member of the Fascist Grand Council.

"He was not expelled, but we have ways of making things diffi-

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cult for undesirables," the Podestà replied.

"Forgive me, Count, if I am asking an indiscreet question, but have you any criticisms to make of my old friend Signor Noel? He feared, probably quite without reason, that he had incurred in some way the displeasure of the authorities."

The Podestà looked over his shoulder to where Corinna was practising her Italian on his wife and James Yarrow, under instructions from John, was being almost excessively polite in his monocled man-of-the-world manner. Then he drew his host toward the farther end of the *salone*.

"Unfortunately there have been rather unpleasant stories about Signor Noel," he said in lowered tones. "And they cause pain to those whose aim is the complete cleansing of the country from the loose and corrupt influence of foreigners."

"Naturally," John assented. "But rumour is not always trustworthy. Signor Noel has been a friend of mine for more than twenty years and I'm sure that in this case the stories are without foundation."

The Podestà eyed his host sceptically without speaking.

"Without foundation at any rate for a long time," John went on.

The Podestà shrugged his shoulders.

"I do not wish to cause you pain, Signor Ogilvie, but I am afraid my information is reliable and very explicit."

"Then my advice to him should be . . ."

"To leave Citrano in the spring," said the Podestà, with a smile that was uncomfortably like a snarl. "Till then I can give you my word nothing inconvenient will happen to him."

Over a week passed without Geoffrey Noel's coming down to the Allegra, and at last John decided to risk upsetting the invalid by calling on him. As he walked up the steep narrow street behind the Piazza, slipping as he went on the wet and greasy cobbles untouched by the November sun, it suddenly occurred to him that this was the street where the little Russian painter Matrassic had lived whose picture of Corinna under the peach-blossom gazing in faint perplexity at the great world beginning to stretch before a baby girl of fourteen months old hung now upon the walls of Tigh nan Ròn. He had wanted Athene to be painted with her, but Athene had

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refused because even to be photographed put her into an agony of self-consciousness. John shivered. Time hastening by had touched him with an icy finger as he passed.

On enquiring at a dimly-lit cavernous little shop that smelt of *pasta* and Parmesan cheese he found that Noel was living in the very house in which the fuzzy-haired little Russian painter had once lodged.

The *signore* was ill, he was told in thick dialect by the blowsy *padrona* of the house when he asked for his friend. In fact he had been in bed now for over a week. John asked if the doctor had called and the blowsy *padrona* looked embarrassed.

"He will not come," she said at last.

"Why not?"

She muttered what was meant to convey a surprised and slightly injured nescience.

"Well, send one of your children to Dr Gambone at once and tell him . . . wait a minute, give him this card." John scribbled something on one of his cards and handed it to the *padrona*.

"Antonio," she called stridently, and the small boy who answered her summons was dispatched.

"Where is the Signore's room?" John asked.

"Signor Noel is in bed," he was told.

"Show me where his room is," he said a little impatiently.

"Perhaps he will not like to be disturbed," the *padrona* objected.

However, she saw that John was determined and dragged herself up from her chair to lead the way upstairs to that very room where once upon a time Matrassic and his wife had lived.

The curtains of the windows opening out on the terrace had not yet been drawn and the dark wet November evening pressed upon the panes with the blankness of utter desolation. Noel was lying in bed, a single candle burning on the table beside it. In a brief glance round the room John looked for the old Broadwood piano along the keyboard of which his hands had slithered excitably in so many attempts to tame the Debussy Preludes that he loved better than any other music.

It was gone. The books remained, and a terra-cotta cast of the Narcissus in the Naples Museum.

"My dear fellow," Noel puffed from the bed. "You really shouldn't have come out on a wet night like this. I shall be all

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right in a few days. *Morbi perniciosiores pluresque sunt animi quam corporis*—m-m-m—just a touch of rheumatism in the knees and shoulder, but I've been more worried by not hearing from Vanessa for over six weeks now."

The *padrona* had pulled the curtains close and withdrawn from the room leaving John to make his own excuses for her disobedience to her lodger's wishes.

"That's easily remedied," said John. "But I don't quite agree with you that this is only a malady of the mind. You look ill, Noel. I've taken it upon myself to send for Dr Gambone."

"But he won't come, Ogilvie. He won't come," Noel gulped in agitation. "I owe him a small account for some injections of arsenic he gave me—m-m-m—about a year ago, and I assure you he will not come."

"I think he will," said John, drawing a chair beside the bed. "You're not very comfortable here. I want to know if you're well enough to be brought down to the Allegra. We'll send the old sedan-chair for you, or has that been abolished by the Fascists as an intolerable passatist survival in whatever year it is of the new Fascist era?"

"Oh, I'm not at all uncomfortable here," Noel insisted. "The room faces south, and when it's fine I have quite a pleasant little *terrazza* outside to enjoy the sun and the sea view over the roofs."

"I don't think you're being properly looked after," John said. "Your *padrona* looks a slattern. What sort of meals are you getting?"

"I'm eating very little. Everything seems to give me acute indigestion."

John regarded his friend. He had seemed shrunken enough when he saw him on the evening of their arrival at the Allegra, but now in that old jacket of white Citrano homespun he was wearing over his pyjamas the emaciation of the neck was more evident and his cheeks resembled crumpled parchment.

"We'll wait until Gambone comes before we argue about that," John decided. "What happened to your piano?"

"Well, when I moved here last April I decided that it really wasn't worth the expense of shifting." Noel hummed and puffed. "The *facchini* wanted a fantastic amount to bring it up here from the *villino* and I had an offer for it from the man where I used to

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buy my tobacco, and I thought it was wiser to accept it."

"Otherwise you were afraid you might not get any more tobacco?" John suggested.

The sick man hummed and mumbled and wriggled at so direct a question, and then suddenly his voice broke and tears began to roll down his haggard cheeks.

"I'm really at the end of my tether," he confessed. "I don't think I can endure any longer the humiliation life has become. Yet in a way I suppose it has been a humiliation for years. Only I never faced up to it, John. I was good-looking as a young man and with this—m-m—temperament of mine I was able to give it—m-m—scope. I had a small private income, and I ate into the capital bit by bit to indulge myself. But I never faced up to the fact that a man of my tastes must sooner or later be exposed to the humiliation of—m-m-m—buying his self-indulgence. I daresay many men experience the same thing over women as they grow older. I suppose that many husbands, indeed, can be said to have bought their wives. Only they can always console themselves with the thought that if it wasn't they it would be somebody else. Whereas a man who buys the favours of his own sex must be always intensely aware if he has any sensitiveness left in him of the depth of the prostitution he is demanding. And as he grows older so every demand he makes becomes more and more unjustifiable because he must, if he is honest with himself, recognize that the possibility of attraction is growing all the while more and more remote. Then after I married Vanessa and she inherited a fortune I felt I was entitled to the allowance she gave me because it was a convenience for her to be a married woman and I made not the slightest attempt to intrude upon her private life. I used up more and more of my own capital and finally became completely dependent on my wife. I realized in my heart that she resented this dependence and for a time I made an effort to earn some money by writing, but without success. And so I added to the humiliation of what I cannot pretend to myself any longer were not deliberately purchased favours, the further humiliation of becoming a dependant of Vanessa's. Then she decided she would like a divorce, and naturally I obliged her and was stupid enough not to insist on the allowance she agreed to go on paying me put into legal form. I call myself stupid but in point of fact nothing would have persuaded me to such a step. The

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expression of my confidence in Vanessa's honour seemed to compensate to a certain extent for my own lack of pride in accepting such an allowance. Well, as you know, already during the war I was having difficulties with Vanessa, and then there was that wretched business of Francesco marrying that awful slut, and since then owing to these Fascists I have had to pay blackmail once or twice, and the whole sorry process of decay has continued until now I really do not know what to do. The tradesmen are so rude, and everybody I used to know in Citrano seems to have left the place or died. I know I have only myself to blame for everything, but self-reproach is the worst of sedatives for a distressed mind."

"The first thing to be done is to clear up your debts," John told him. "And the next thing is for you to leave Citrano. I was speaking to the Podestà last week when you couldn't come to lunch. . . ."

"Loathsome little bounder," Noel gulped.

"It was Fofo who warned me I had better be tactful with him about you . . . and well, I'm afraid in the spring he'll get you out of Citrano."

"But where shall I go? Where *can* I go?" Noel asked in a flutter of nerves at the prospect. "I really cannot face the loneliness of a new place. Here at least I am still able to nod to a few people on the Piazza, and when Vanessa's allowance does arrive I enjoy a few comparatively serene days and the courtesies of those who hope to be paid something on account. But a new place! My dear fellow, I really don't believe I could stand it."

"I've been thinking it over," John said. "And I've come to the conclusion that you'd be happier on my island than anywhere. You may sometimes feel lonely, but you'll have a good library and a Blüthner baby-grand and bodily comfort. I shall often be away and the weather can be quite infernal, but you can be at peace, I think. You will have no material worries. Of course, if we can get an assurance from this fellow Monreale that you won't be disturbed here, something else might be arranged; but I don't think we shall get any such assurance, and if we did I should be disinclined to attach much value to it."

"I really can't say anything, Ogilvie. You've left me without words." He laid his hand upon the coverlet for John to grasp, and they sat talking about Pirandello, who to Geoffrey Noel's

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immense gratification had just been awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, until the arrival of Dr Gambone.

John left him with the patient and waited downstairs while the doctor made his examination.

He looked grave.

"I am sorry, Signor Ogilvie, but it will be necessary for Signor Noel to go at once to Naples where he can be properly examined. I suspect a grave condition."

"Very grave?"

"Very grave."

"And you did not feel it was your professional duty to attend him when he wished to consult you?" John asked coldly. The doctor was lavish with excuses and explanations, the gold fillings in his teeth winking the while like a heliograph.

"*Va bene! Basta!*" John interrupted impatiently. "Send me the bill you say has not been paid. I will be responsible for the expense of sending Signor Noel in to Naples, and for bringing you out on this wet night."

But no expense was incurred in sending Geoffrey Noel to Naples. The following afternoon Peppino, another of the *padrona's* children, arrived at the Villa Allegra with a message from his mother to say that the *signora* was very ill.

"*Sta gravissimo,*" the blowsy woman shrilled when John reached the house. "*Ho fatto tutto tutto, ma . . .*"

Dr Gambone was coming out of the sick man's room when John reached the head of the stairs. He turned up his eyes.

"*È morto,*" he said, with a ready and unctuous simulation of grievous disappointment. "*Ho fatto tutto, signore mio, ma*" . . . the infinity of his medical care was indicated by a gesture.

Geoffrey Noel was buried two days later in the little plot of ground next the *campo santo* which was reserved for non-Catholics. An English clergyman staying in Sorrento came over to read the funeral service. The cypresses in the cemetery were waving in a fierce *libeccio* or sou'wester, and the rain beat upon the few mourners, among whom was Don Alfonso Massa, a vast sable shape.

"It was kind of you to come, Fofò," John said to him.

"He was something of the time before the war, *signore*. He belonged to our Italy," Fofò replied; and a solitary tear trickled down upon his cheek where, caught in a furrow of fat, it hung

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glistening for a moment. "*La nostra Italia, la nostra Italia*," he murmured to himself, and as he shook his head the tear escaped from the furrow to mingle with the rain.

John wrote to ask Mrs Noel if she would like a few books and the manuscripts of her husband's attempts to translate into English verse various French, Italian, Greek, and Latin poets. What furniture remained to him had been bequeathed to Francesco, it appeared. She answered from Biarritz, without thanking John for any trouble he had taken but expressing a desire that he should keep the books and manuscripts and let her know what expense he had been put to. On a postcard he wrote: *No expense. I'll keep the books and MSS. J. P. O.*

On the tombstone was engraved:

GEOFFREY LANWOOD NOEL
obiit a.d. vii Kal. Dec. MCMXXXIV
morte magis metuenda senectus

VALE

"I couldn't give the date of his birth," John said to James Yarrow. "He would never tell it. But I fancy he was about seventy-two. And he did fear old age more than death."

"Poor old thing," James commented. "It's a pity he should have died out here, penurious and expatriated, just when homosexuality in England is reaching its fashionable zenith in artistic circles."

The weather for the rest of November and first week of December continued to be deplorable, but on the feast of the Immaculate Conception the halcyon began and a pair of *zampognari*, mountaineers from Calabria, arrived in their voluminous blue cloaks and heavy hats to pipe their immemorial carols before every little roadside shrine of the Blessed Virgin in the neighbourhood. There seemed hardly a moment of this serene time when somewhere under the tender rain-washed blue of the winter sky the bourdon of the great bagpipe and the plaintive skirl of the second instrument, a kind of chanter shaped like a flageolet, were not heard, whether on the jetty of the little tumble-down port below the green-tiled

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dome of Our Lady's church on the headland or far up the mountain-side where ilex or wild locust spread its boughs above a shrine. Each house in turn these two pipers visited as well, the older man making the room vibrate with his great bagpipe, his companion, a boy of eighteen, playing the melody upon his chanter. Then glasses of red Citrano would be drunk and the favour of Our Lady invoked for the house and its inmates. The *zampognari* would receive a monetary token of gratitude and they in turn would present a long wooden spoon in appreciation of their entertainment. In due course, on December 18th, they reached the Villa Allegra.

Conversation was not fluent, because these visitors from the mountains spoke very little Italian, and their dialect, with its relics of classical Latin and even Greek, was as hard to follow as a Cockney would find the Doric of remote Aberdeenshire.

Suddenly John noticed that one of them was saying '*crai*' instead of '*domani*' for to-morrow.

"My god, James," he exclaimed, "did you hear that? *Cras amet qui nunquam amavit quique amavit cras amet*. Let who ne'er loved love to-morrow and who has loved love again. I'll have that carved upon the wooden spoon to commemorate the thrill of hearing that survival of the *Pervigilium Veneris*."

"In Sardinia they still say *sunt* for *sono* and *casu* for cheese," James Yarrow reminded him.

"But that *crai*, James. It's such a confident word. *Domani*, like *manaña* and all the rest of the procrastinating evasive to-morrows in every tongue, are bromide for the urgent present. *Cras* and *crai* are bombs of the urgent future bursting upon the lazy present."

"Well, to-morrow is calling me, John, as urgently as *cras* or *crai*," James Yarrow announced. "I have an offer to go out to China and see what I can buy for a rich collecting friend of mine, and I must be in London before Christmas."

"That means I may not see you again for another five years," John said gloomily. "Perhaps longer."

And once again time touched his hand with an icy finger as he passed.

"I never go anywhere without being prepared to go for ever," James Yarrow said.

"I'm afraid it has been dreary for you here, James," John said to his friend. "Taking a furnished house is not like living in one's

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own. It's annoying Bodisko didn't leave the key of the Tower with anybody. And the weather has been vile for most of our visit. I expect I've been depressing. Perhaps it was a mistake to come to Citrano. It's linked with too much that is irreparably over in my life. I'm driven into sentimentality against my will. Yes, I feel I've been dull company, James. I think Corinna has felt it a bit too."

"It's a pity she has this flying mania. There's some brain there, John. Female, yes, but enough to deserve to remain in its own skull instead of being scattered in an attempt to break some flying record."

"This may be only a passing phase," the father said.

"In that case you should try to switch her off it as soon as possible," his friend advised.

"Why?"

"Because 'mental calf-love is just as much a disorganizer of the mind's development as any other kind of calf-love.'"

"But if it's not a passing phase, James, I don't want to risk a waste of passion. I'd rather she killed herself flying than died within herself as her dreams faded. However, Padraig is coming for Christmas, and Arthur is going to be here for her birthday, and Julius Stern's eldest boy may turn up later. I hear from his mother that he's wandering about in Slovenia at the moment. What Corinna needs is young people, not older people in a place where they have been young. Ex-Arcadians should keep away from Arcadia."

"Well, of course, I have always avoided any kind of commitments in my existence," James said. "There are compensations for myopia when the mind is clear. One enjoys one's immediate surroundings with zest, and escapes the temptation of the *au delà*. My furthest horizon doesn't extend more than a few yards without glasses, and they immediately reduce the blur of romance to a proper clarity of outline. Long-sighted people usually strain their eyes and by middle age are at the mercy of glasses to read what is in front of their own noses."

A day or two before Christmas, John and Corinna drove into Naples to speed James upon his way.

"If you don't come back for five years," Corinna told him, "I'll be just going to be nineteen and perhaps I'll come and fetch you in my plane."

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"And we'll go back together by boat, my girl. Good-bye."

James's head was withdrawn into the compartment. John and his daughter drove back to their hotel. They were meeting Padraig next day.

This was Padraig's first visit to Italy, and he was inclined at first to be a little obstinate in his support of Switzerland's claims against Corinna's knowledgeableness about Italy. They all went to midnight Mass at the minute church of limestone and weather-stained stucco dedicated to the Holy Child. It stood in a small wooded garden at the end of a winding paved path that turned off from the road leading up into the hills behind Citrano. Upon this holy night the garden and the winding path were thronged with worshippers, for the Crib here was famous for its beauty; but the priest had reserved places for the Allegra party in the front of the congregation. It was in this minute church that Corinna had heard her first Mass on the Easter morning after her first birthday. The Morning Glory had been pouring in a cascade of blossom over the porch and she had stretched out her hands in excited laughter to greet such beauty when Mairi had carried her in. Now at the sight of the Crib which was filled as full as a canvas of Crivelli with tiny gaily-bedizened mediaeval figures at their daily business, regardless of the stable in the middle where the Holy Child lay in His manger, she almost exclaimed aloud in delight at such beauty. "Oh, Mairi, my love," she whispered in Gaelic, "how beautiful it is."

After Mass was over Corinna knelt for a long time beside the Crib, so deeply enthralled by the scene that the voices of the people murmuring their admiration as they passed in turn to do reverence to the Holy Child seemed to be the voices of the multitudinous figures that thronged the carved and painted scene before her eyes. This was the world in which she had been living historically come back to the life of to-day, and her fancy did not shadow with the wings of aeroplanes such a sky of glittering stars. Those enraptured minutes when she knelt before the Crib were the golden crown of her childhood, and that night childhood fell away from her.

Corinna was allowed to sit up for the first time to see in the New Year. Twice in the course of the evening bands of boys

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with strange home-made instruments arrived at the Villa Allegra to sing the long *capo d'anno* ballad with its catchy refrain to which the leader of the party beat time by thumping upon the floor the trunk of the small bay-tree he carried. At midnight the bells pealed in the duomo, a few maroons banged, and the *famiglia* came into the *salone*.

"Well," said John, raising his glass, "I don't think 1934 has been a model year in the world's history; let's hope that 1935 will make up for its predecessor. A happy New Year to everybody. *Buon capo d'anno a tutti quanti. Bliadhna mhath ur,*" he finished in Gaelic for Mairi's benefit, and was echoed by Padraig in Irish.

In Italian, English, and Gaelic the company responded to the greeting, and at that moment a loud knocking was heard at the door.

"*Mamma mia!*" one of the maids exclaimed in alarm. But it was not the secret police who entered; it was Sebastian.

"Darling Sebastian, how lovely to see you!" Corinna cried, running to greet him with a kiss.

"*Buon capo d'anno a tutti quanti in questa casa,*" he called out, and then, taking his fiddle from its case, he began to play the *capo d'anno* song which the *famiglia* sang with shrill heartiness interspersed with giggles, for the newcomer's frogged jacket lined with sheepskin was sometimes too much for them.

"Well, this is a splendid surprise," John declared when the *famiglia* had departed. "Are you as dark as a first-footer should be to bring good fortune to a house?"

"Of course he's dark, Father," Corinna declared. "Look at his eyebrows and those funny smoky eyes. The glints of gold in his hair don't make him fair."

"Corinna," Mairi protested, "you're being very personal. I'm sure it's time you were going to bed."

"Oh no, please, oh, can't I stay up a little longer?" she implored. Mairi looked at Corinna's father.

"You've seen the New Year in. Bed," he told her.

Sebastian picked up his fiddle and began to play Mozart's lullaby.

"You won't be gone in the morning, Sebastian?" she asked anxiously.

"Good lord, no. I've come to eat your birthday cake," he replied. "I'll tell you about my adventures to-morrow."

Corinna kissed her father good-night. Then she kissed

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Sebastian, and was on her way to the door when Padraig called after her to know why she was leaving him out of her 'good-nights'.

"Oh, I am so sorry, Padraig. I thought I'd said good-night to you."

She came back, kissed him lightly on the forehead, and went quickly to join Mairi who was waiting for her in the doorway.

Padraig left Citrano two days later to join his friend Jack Marsham in Switzerland for a fortnight of winter sports before going back to Oxford for the Lent Term; but the day after Twelfth Night Arthur arrived from Paris to spend eight days in Citrano and assist at Corinna's fourteenth birthday before he went back. John wondered how Arthur would get on with Sebastian nowadays. From nearly thirteen years ago he heard Arthur aged eleven protesting against the assumption that Sebastian aged seven would be a good companion for him. *'You might ask Mother not always to say when I'm going out that Sebastian can come.'* But they had met often in America since then, John remembered, and he was glad to see with what cordiality they greeted one another. Padraig and Sebastian had not been too friendly during the two days before Padraig had left for Switzerland. Padraig had seemed slightly huffed by the way Corinna took him for granted and paid such earnest attention to Sebastian's stories about the autumn he had spent wandering through Slovenia.

"I remember Citrano perfectly well," said Arthur. "But it appears to have shrunk rather."

"Shrunk?" John exclaimed. "It seems to me twice the size it was."

"What I can remember almost best of all is imitating the conductor of the band on the Piazza," said Sebastian. "And Arthur getting so darned peeved with me that he went off and left me. Gosh! I can remember looking around and seeing he wasn't there and I was darned near bursting into tears."

"Arthur, that was beastly of you," said Corinna reproachfully.

"I guess poor old Arthur had had enough of me," Sebastian laughed. "I must have been the darnedest kid."

"But what did you do when you found you were alone?" Corinna asked.

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"Why, I marched around the Piazza by myself for a bit, and then I turned my hand in and made for home."

"And then I got scared because I couldn't find you on the Piazza," Arthur went on. "I'd only been hiding just around the corner. And I started off after you. I was frightened to death what my mother would say if you were lost, but I caught you up just before the *viale* down to the Allegra, and gosh, I was glad to see you."

"I'll say you were," Sebastian chuckled. "You gave me a bag of candy."

"What kind of candy?" Corinna asked intently.

"Oh gee, Corinna, have a heart. Who's going to remember what candy he ate when he was seven years old?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I do remember," said Arthur. "It was fruit drops."

"Look at that now," Sebastian exclaimed. "Boy, you sure will be some lawyer. Say, Uncle John, I wish we could have a bit of decent weather. It's been blowing and raining ever since I arrived. I'd like fine to get out to the siren isles one day."

"We had glorious weather in October," Corinna told him. "And we went to Cantone and stayed there for two nights. And Mr Noel—he's dead now—found a lachrymatory . . ."

"Found a what?" asked Sebastian. "But don't try and tell me if it hurts too much."

"It's a tiny little glass bottle for tears," Corinna explained.

"That's a new soft drink on me," said Sebastian. "It sure is. Did you ever hear tell of bottled tears, Arthur?"

"The ancient Romans used them for mourning," Corinna informed him.

"What did they drink at night. Perspiration?"

"Oh, Sebastian, you are disgusting. They didn't drink the tears."

"What did they put them in a bottle for?"

"To keep in tombs."

"The ancient Romans did?"

"Yes."

"No wonder they came to a bad end," said Sebastian. "All the same I wish we could go to this place."

"If we get a decent day we'll drive over to Nerano and walk along the cliff to Minerva's Cape," said John. "Expeditions by

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sea are out of the question at this time of year."

They had to wait until two days before Corinna's birthday before the weather was kind. Even then it was not kind enough to make a picnic of it, for though the sun was shining brightly a chill *tramontana* was blowing from the north and the waves in the Bay of Naples, deeper than lapis lazuli, were capped with foam. Sebastian strode ahead with Corinna half running beside him, and they had been searching for a terra-cotta head of Minerva for nearly ten minutes before John and Arthur reached the end of the *punta*.

"We haven't found one," Corinna called.

Nor did they find one; but on the way back to Nerano John and Arthur walked ahead, and it was Sebastian and Corinna who arrived a quarter of an hour after them at the little *albergo* where they had ordered a meal.

The morning of January 14th was serene and bright. The north wind had ceased to blow. There was a general opinion in Citrano that such a day was not sincere and that it would presently be paid for by foul weather from the south or east. Fourteen-year-old Corinna was not bothering about such prophecies as she sat at breakfast, pulling the paper from her presents.

She came at last to one inscribed *From Sebastian* and flushed.

"Oh, I wonder what it is. Oh, darling Sebastian, I am so excited."

The brown paper was undone and then within there was something wrapped in white tissue-paper from the foam of which emerged a tiny bronze Venus who had lain so long beneath the waters of the Parthenopean Bay that she was crusted by a patina green as her natal sea.

"Sebastian, she's lovely! Father, isn't she lovely?"

"I couldn't get hold of a Minerva for you anywhere in Citrano, but I got this at that antique shop in the Piazza. I don't like her pedestal. Maybe I'll get a jade pedestal in Naples or Rome. She is pretty cute, I think."

And at that moment Mairi came in with the wooden spoon on which some Citrano craftsman had carved for John the motto he had chosen for it:

*Cras amet qui nunquam amavit
Quique amavit cras amet.*

a.d. xv Kal. Ian. MCMXXXIV

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"This is a supplementary birthday present of mine," he told his daughter.

"What does the Latin mean?"

"I had that put on to commemorate a bit of dialect. *Cras* means to-morrow and the *zampognari* used *crai* instead of *domani*, which gave me pleasure."

"Yes, but what does the rest of it mean?" she asked again.

"It's the first line of a lovely late Latin poem called, appropriately enough for your little statue *Pervigilium Veneris*—the Vigil of Venus. And the date is December 18th, 1934."

"Yes, but you won't tell me what it means," Corinna persisted.

John hesitated for a moment.

"It means literally *To-morrow let him love who has never loved and he who has loved to-morrow let him love*. Or to make an English jingle of it in the Latin metre, *Let who ne'er loved love to-morrow and who has loved love again*."

The day after Corinna's birthday John drove into Naples with Arthur to see him off for Paris. The hooting of the car's horn was adding just a little to the clangour of Castellamare when Arthur turned to him and asked, with the very voice and expression of his mother, it seemed, whether he had noticed anything about Sebastian and Corinna.

"What do you mean?" John exclaimed in surprise.

"I think they're well on the way to a love-affair," Arthur said bluntly.

"But, my dear Arthur, Corinna was only fourteen yesterday."

"I don't think age comes into it, John. I know that talk about age didn't affect me one way or the other over Blanche. And Mother was wise enough to see pretty quickly that a difference of age wasn't going to change the situation so far as I was concerned."

"I don't accept the parallel," John said emphatically.

"I don't say that it is a parallel. There's no question of Sebastian and Corinna getting engaged, let alone married. What I am saying, though, is that if she and Sebastian have fallen in love with one another it won't be any use for you to preach age to either of them as a reason for not being in love. You'll have to go about the whole business a bit less clumsily than that if you want to put

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an end to it. Or that's what I think anyway. I mean to say, a girl can fall in love at fourteen just the same as she can at eighteen. And in Corinna's case there's every encouragement to fall in love. She's living with you and travelling around and just as much quit of schools and schoolma'ams as if she was eighteen. I don't see what you're so surprised about."

"No, I suppose I oughtn't to be surprised," John admitted. "Dear me, you're very wise, Arthur. What a wonderful family lawyer you'll be in another twenty years!"

"Now, look, don't get me wrong, John. I'm not saying Sebastian and Corinna have started a love-affair. I don't believe they have. All I'm saying is that they're liable to start a love-affair if you make it so darned easy for them. I'm sure if Mother were alive she'd have noticed pretty quick the way things were moving, and I think she'd have made it difficult—oh, ever so sweetly and kindly—but darned difficult for them to move any further."

"I expect you're right, Arthur. Thanks for the readjustment of my point of view."

They said no more about Sebastian and Corinna for the rest of the drive, but just before the train drew out of the Naples railway station Arthur recalled it had been in a January thirteen years ago that Prudence had escorted him as far as Rome on his journey back to school.

"That was when she met Mario Aprili. I didn't realize it at the time, but I guess they both fell for each other right away. He was pretty nice to me, I remember, and sent me a black shirt which caused some stir at the school that term. How old was Prudence then?"

"She was going to be nineteen that May."

"I'd call Corinna just about half and half of Mother and Prudence," Arthur continued thoughtfully. "It's a pretty good mixture for looks. I tell you, John, I was astonished to see the difference in her from last year. Hullo, we're off. Good-bye, John."

"Good-bye. Messages to Mrs Langridge, and thanks again, Arthur."

During the drive back to Citrano John turned over in his mind the wisest way of counteracting any danger of the sort Arthur had

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suggested. Of course, an ultimate marriage between Sebastian and Corinna would give the greatest joy to Julius, Leonora, and himself, but there was no better way of spoiling the likelihood of such a marriage than by allowing the attraction that, according to Arthur at any rate, already existed to exhaust itself prematurely. Arthur, however, might be wrong. Yet the more he thought about it the less was he inclined to think that Arthur was wrong. Nevertheless, he must feel sure himself. To let either of them suspect that a simple friendship was being regarded by older people in a different light might inflict on both of them a deadly wound by which the whole future of their lives might be ruined. And if he should be convinced, what then would be the right way to handle such a situation?

When John got back to the Villa Allegra he found that Sebastian and Corinna had not yet returned from a walk on which they had started after lunch.

"They've been away a long time, Mairi," he exclaimed in a sudden fret of anxiety. "Do you know where they were going?"

"I believe they were going to walk down the cliff on the other side of Citrano. It was such a lovely afternoon. Corinna was saying the other day she would like to walk down there when it was fine."

"Do you mean where the path goes down off the cornice road about two miles beyond the town?"

"That would be the place, sir."

John went out on the terrace, and looked across the semilune of sand to the lights that were coming out on the eastern horn of the land in the fast-deepening January dusk. Beyond the Torre Sarcena the overcast south-west horizon was gashed here and there with the faded crimson of the sunset. The news that Corinna and Sebastian had taken the same path as Prudence and Mario once upon a time seemed, irrationally enough, a confirmation of what Arthur had suggested. And then he saw them walking back across the sand, Corinna in that powder-blue camel-hair coat which Elise had found for her in London. She had one arm in his, and with the other seemed to be carrying something.

John left the terrace and went into the *salone* to ring for tea.

A minute or two afterwards Corinna and Sebastian came in with

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two great bunches of tazetta narcissus whose white petals and yellow cups filled the room with fragrance.

"I'm sorry we're late, Uncle John, but it was so fine and warm where we were sitting that it seemed a pity to come away," Sebastian said.

"Oh, Father, it was glorious, and there are thousands of narcissus in flower. We went right down to a kind of grassy plateau just above the sea."

"I know it," said John. "Any cyclamens out yet under the arbutus on the path down?"

"I didn't see any, but there was a patch of crocuses, and they looked lovely when they were open in the sun before it clouded over—a sort of buff and mauve in streaks."

"Imperati," said John. "They're the earliest of the crocuses in the New Year."

They sat down to tea, and presently Mairi came in with the second post.

There were no letters for Sebastian. So he picked up the *Mattino* and read about the patience of the Duce under Abyssinian provocation. Corinna had a late birthday letter from Monica.

Among John's letters were two from Scotland. The first was from Alasdair MacPhee and had been forwarded from Tigh nan Ròn:

15 CASTLE WALK, INVERNESS

Jan. 8

Dear Mr Ogilvie,

Four years ago this month you and I had a long talk in the Portrose hotel which I have never forgotten. I do not want to say more in a letter than that I have decided to do what I have long contemplated doing. Mr Beaton thought I ought to consult you before taking action, but I understand you are now in Italy. Would you be kind enough to let me know when you are likely to be back in Scotland? Now that I have taken my decision I do not want to wait about too long, and unless there is some likelihood of your being back fairly soon I think I will go ahead with my plan. I don't see, anyway, why I would be bothering you with it beforehand. You had enough annoyance over that foolish nonsense in the Advertiser. If I don't hear from you within a fortnight, I will assume that you are leaving everything to me. If we meet

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I will give you my news. If we do not meet you will be hearing plenty news of me.

Yours for Scotland,

Alasdair MacPhee

The other had been sent direct by Archie Beaton, to whom John had given his address:

"THE QUIRANG"

12/1/35

A Charaid,

I'm unwilling to be intruding upon your sojourn abroad, but in respect of the conversation we had when you kindly called upon me on your way through Glasgow in the autumn I believe I ought to let you know that things have gone some way farther since then. I understand that our young friend A. M. has written to ask when you will be back in Scotland. If you could be seeing him fairly soon and would let him know accordingly it might be all for the best. I will say no more just now. But, to be frank, I am a wee bit worried.

Is mise le meas

A. B.

"You didn't have bad news, Father, did you?" Corinna asked when he was pondering these two letters with a frown.

"Not actually bad news," he replied, "but news that will mean our going home as soon as possible."

And as he said this he saw the colour fade from his daughter's cheeks till they were whiter than the *Mattino* which Sebastian was holding in front of his face.

"As soon as possible?" she repeated. "In a week?"

"The day after to-morrow, if we can," her father replied. "I'm sorry, Sebastian, to break up your visit like this, but I simply must return to Scotland."

"Isn't that too bad," Sebastian mumbled.

"Will you travel back with us?" John asked.

"Oh no, I guess I'll stay around in Italy for a while," he answered. "Do you think they'd let me stay in the guest-house at Monte Cassino for a while, Uncle John? I have a piece of music in my head and I'd like to write it down. Your description of the

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old place rather took my fancy, and I wouldn't think there'd be many guests there at this time of year."

"I shouldn't think there'd be any. I want to send three or four telegrams. I wonder if you'll be kind enough to take them up to the post office for me?" John asked.

"Sure I'll take them," said Sebastian.

"Do you think I could walk up with Sebastian, Father? I'm not a bit tired."

John hesitated a moment, but his daughter's woebegone face was too much for him and as he sat down to write the telegrams he told her she could go. To Alasdair MacPhee he telegraphed suggesting he should accompany him on his next business round, to Archie Beaton that he should be back in Scotland within a week, and to Prudence asking if she could have Corinna at Erpingham for a couple of weeks.

"Let me see, to-night's Tuesday. I'll take you down to Erpingham on the twenty-first. And now I must book sleepers from Rome and seats in the plane at Le Bourget."

He glanced quickly at his daughter to see if this announcement kindled a sparkle in her eyes, but there was no response.

Sebastian and Corinna were walking up the cobbled *viale* toward the town. Her arm was in his, and his hands were thrust deep into his pockets as they always used to be when confronting some problem of childhood.

"Sebastian, when *do* you think we shall see each other again?" she asked dolefully.

"I might come up to the Island next summer, perhaps," he suggested. "I don't think I can come back from the Continent before that very well after refusing to go back to Cambridge for another year. When spring comes I thought of working my way up to Poland. Or maybe I'll go to Spain presently. I don't really know."

"You'll be a frightful long way off wherever you go," she sighed. "I don't believe distance makes any odds. If you're away you're just as much away ten miles as you are a thousand. You're as much away ten yards if it comes to that."

"Anyhow, I wouldn't have been able to stay on here for more

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than another month at most," Sebastian said. "I can't take a strong line with my father and mother, and then park myself on Uncle John."

He began to hum to himself that Beethoven sonata in F sharp major which John had wanted to christen the Theresa Sonata.

"It was lovely on the island last January, wasn't it, when you came with Monica?" she said.

"How did you know I was thinking about the island?"

"Aren't you humming something you used to play on the piano there?"

He looked round at her and took hold of her arm.

"You remember that, do you?"

She nodded.

"You know, honey, you're some kid. You certainly are. You know, I believe I'm in love with you—which is ridiculous."

"Why is it ridiculous?" she whispered, her heart beating.

"Well, if I am, what can we do about it?"

"Love each other," she said, looking up at him, wide-eyed in the dim wavering light of a street-lamp. Fascism had failed so far to improve the quality of Citrano's electricity.

"Why, yes, I suppose we can, but it seems kind of crazy. I mean to say we can't go and tell folks we love each other. They'll just laugh. And I get mad when folks laugh."

"Well, we won't tell anybody," she said confidently. "It can be a secret between you and me."

"Yes, but, Corinna, you're only just fourteen. If we're allowed to get away with loving each other when you're seventeen we'll have done pretty well. And from fourteen to seventeen is one hell of a long time. I won't be twenty till next month, and we may be different people when you're seventeen and I'm twenty-three."

"I won't feel any differently about you," she said, again so confidently.

"Well, by gosh, Corinna, I don't believe I will about you," he declared. "But we've just got to wait and see. Honey sweet, we really have. In a way I'm glad we'll be separated. Yes, I'm even glad Uncle John was called back home now. Look, I'm trying to be wise; for the love of Mike try and be wise with me," he begged.

"Well, I will. I'll always do whatever you want me to do," she vowed. "But don't go on talking about my being so young.

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Juliet was two years younger than me when Romeo loved her, and Beatrice was younger still when Dante saw her first. It's only nowadays all this nonsense is talked about being so young. I think they understood much better about people in the Middle Ages. I wish I'd lived then."

"You couldn't have flown then. And yet I'm not so sure. Witches flew around quite a lot, didn't they?"

"Well, I wouldn't have been a witch," Corinna exclaimed indignantly.

"Wouldn't you? I tell you, I'm not so sure."

They had reached the Strada Mussolini by now—for a few months it had once been the Strada Woodrow Wilson—and were drawing nearer to the Piazza.

"Know what I'm thinking, Corinna?" he asked.

She shook her head.

"I was thinking of your being wheeled about the Piazza in your perambulator. I wonder you didn't bewitch me then. But I was a tough kid. I was pretty suspicious of the whole female sex in those days. By gosh, we can nearly brag we've known each other all our lives."

While Sebastian was sending off the telegrams in the crowded post office Corinna vanished for a few minutes. It was not until they were walking back down the *viale* toward the Allegra that she produced the result of that brief expedition.

"You say I'm a witch. Here's a charm for you, Sebastian."

She gave him a pointed piece of coral set in silver.

"That's to ward off the evil eye," he said.

"Yes, but I've put a wish on it," she told him. "Besides protecting you against the evil eye, it will protect you against the eye of anybody who looks at you except me."

"Some fire-insurance policy!" he chuckled.

"You ought to wear it on a watch-chain," she said.

"I haven't got a watch-chain."

"I know. So I bought a chain as well. Sebastian, you will wear it round your neck, won't you?" She attached the coral charm to a fine silver chain that was meant for scapular or blessed medal.

"That's a promise," Sebastian vowed. "I'll hang it around my neck to-night."

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"No, I want to put it on myself. Put your head down."

He obeyed her, and fastening the chain she pushed it and the coral below his unbuttoned collar.

"Well, that gives the works to anybody who looks at me, but how about if I look at anybody first?" he asked, twinkling.

"If you did I'd just be sorry I was so silly once as to think I would love you for ever," she replied simply.

"Yes, I guess that's the answer all right," he said. "You know, I've got quite a lot to do to live up to, what between music and you."

"I think you'll be famous one day, Sebastian darling."

"You do?"

"I'm sure of it."

"You are? Well, I've got a hunch myself I will be, but I never thought the first person to whom I'd confide that hunch would be something I'd seen being wheeled about in a perambulator."

"Sebastian, we'll soon be back in the house. Kiss me good-bye now."

He held her in his arms. The night was still, so still that the fluttering of a winter moth against the lamp fixed to the high ferny wall behind them seemed loud; but when they reached the courtyard of the villa the cypresses were beginning to whisper to a cold *grecale* springing up, with rain from the north-east not far away.

Two days later, soon after the last glimpse of Vesuvius had been caught through the drenching rain from the compartment of which John, Corinna, Mairi, and Sebastian occupied the four corners, Sebastian took out his fiddle and began to play a slow melody.

"What's that?" John asked. "It's new to me."

"It's new to me," Sebastian answered. "It's an idea for the *adagio* of the second movement of a sonata in F major for violin and piano I'm going to write."

"Will it have a title?" John asked with a smile.

"No, but I hope it's going to be worth an opus number. I haven't given an opus number to anything I've composed so far."

John asked the composer to play the *adagio* again.

"It's beautiful," he said as Sebastian put the violin back into its case. "Have you the other movements in your head?"

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"I have the whole sonata in my head, but I've lots of work to do on it."

"I hope the guest-brother at Monte Cassino won't turn you away," said John. "It would be a good place in which to write your first sonata."

"If I don't get in there, maybe I'll move along to Rome and stay there awhile."

The train went on through the rain-blurred hilly landscape.

"It's a real soaking wretched *levante*," said John. "When it does rain from the east it makes no mistake about it. We'll be at Cassino in about an hour. I wish you were coming all the way with us, Sebastian. And I wish even more that I hadn't had to break up your visit in this horrid way. If you do come to England in the summer you'll have to come to Scotland as well."

"I certainly will, Uncle John."

The next hour went by with desultory talk, and at last the train stopped in the dreary little station of Cassino. Sebastian gathered his simple possessions, shook hands with John and Mairi, leaned over and kissed Corinna swiftly, and then hurried out into the corridor. The last glimpse they had of him in his frogged jacket lined with sheepskin was in obvious consultation about a car up to the monastery. Then the train moved on and through the drenching rain they saw the great pile towering above the railway with its weight of history.

Corinna was quiet, and John feared heart-sick, throughout the railway journey to Paris; but at Le Bourget, while they were in the comfortable waiting-room of the great aerodrome, she said to him suddenly:

"Father, you didn't think I wasn't thrilled at the thought of flying again, did you?"

"I thought you were taking it rather for granted," John admitted.

"I wasn't. I wasn't really. Only I was terribly upset at the moment because I hadn't expected to leave Citrano all of a sudden and see no more of Sebastian. . . ." She hesitated. "You see, I like Sebastian most frightfully."

"So do I," her father told her.

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She looked quickly round at him, her eyes as bright with life as fragments of blue breaking through a clouded sky.

"I am glad you do."

John suddenly decided what line to take with her.

"Aren't you perhaps a little in love with him?" he asked softly.

A deep blush swirled over her face and, receding, left upon her cheeks two flecks of burning crimson.

"I do love him," she affirmed in a voice so small that it seemed to come without a tremor from the innermost depths of her being. "I suppose you think that's a silly thing for a girl to say?" she asked in her own familiar tone.

"Why should I think it silly?" he replied. "There's a good deal of me in you."

She searched his eyes as if she were seeking therein the reflection of herself, and then, putting her hand in his, sighed happily.

"But you're wise enough to understand that lots of other people might think I was silly in not thinking it silly," John went on. "And so you wouldn't expect me to tell anybody else, would you?"

"I would hate you to tell anybody else."

"Well, when I first guessed what had happened I made up my mind to tell Prudence." He did not realize that for the first time in speaking of her to Corinna he had left out the 'aunt' until Corinna herself exclaimed in obvious dismay:

"Tell Aunt Prudence?"

"You needn't be so horrified by the idea. Prudence would not have been unsympathetic." And then briefly he related the story of his sister and Mario Aprili.

"And you found her where Sebastian and I went?" Corinna asked in a voice of awe.

"Perhaps you will never be called upon to be as brave as she was, but I'd like to be able to feel sure that you would be," John said.

"If Sebastian were to be killed?"

"Yes, or if Sebastian in three or four years were to be a different Sebastian from what he is now? You see, when one is young one must change much more than when one is older. That applies just as much to you. I daresay neither you nor Sebastian will change, but if either or both of you did, you couldn't blame either yourselves or one another. That is important to remember, because you won't be able to see a great deal of each other in the

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immediate future. Sebastian has made a choice for himself. He has decided that he is more likely to compose good music if he feels completely free. And his father and mother have agreed to his leading his own life on the Continent in his own way. Now it wouldn't be fair, would it, if he were to feel that you were a responsibility? We all have great hopes of him, and if by an unlucky chance those hopes were disappointed you wouldn't like people to say 'No wonder, when he ought to have been concentrating on his work he was all the time thinking about Corinna Ogilvie.' You've got to remember that the creation of a work of art isn't the same as ordinary work. Oh, yes, like ordinary work it demands perseverance and industry and patience and puts a strain upon the will, but none of those would be of any use if the vital spark which distinguishes a creative artist from a craftsman or an engineer or a clerk or a shopkeeper failed to kindle. Creative art, like life itself, is still a mystery. It is a dim, oh, a very, very, very dim shadow of what we call the Creation, and Almighty God Himself is a creative artist on a scale of course beyond anything our feeble human understanding can do more than faintly apprehend through Divine revelation. Stop me if you don't follow what I'm trying to say."

"I think I'm understanding," she said.

"When Almighty God created Heaven and Earth and Life, He was working in His own marvellous way like a combination of a sculptor, a painter, and an architect. And then, as you know, man, who was intended to be the supreme creature of this sublime design, spoilt it by his behaviour and Almighty God had to make Himself into a poet to direct the universe once more to His Divine purpose. You remember the Last Gospel at Mass—the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We genuflect, don't we, when the priest reads those words? We bow the knee as we do at the *Et Incarnatus* in the Creed, in token of our awed recognition of what is a new aspect of God as a creative artist. And if you study the life of Our Blessed Lord in the Holy Gospels you'll find that what we call a poet is the nearest human approach to Almighty God when He took human flesh. That doesn't mean Our Lord wrote poetry. His life *was* poetry as our greatest poets have tried to express in words their sense of a real life behind the outward appearance of life upon this earth. When we're back in the island this

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spring we'll read through the Gospels to find examples of Our Lord as a poet. The only one I'll mention now is the story of Martha and Mary. Our Lord wanted something more than practical help: He wanted Mary's understanding. Well, when Our Lord had accomplished his re-creation of human nature the Holy Spirit descended to be with us always, and the Holy Spirit is the Divine composer. Now, to most of us indeed, and perhaps to the supreme composers themselves, great music is the most mysterious of all the arts. So far in the history of mankind we have had very very few supremely great musicians compared with the painters and sculptors and architects and poets. It might be too ambitious to expect Sebastian to become a supremely great composer; but I do believe he may become a great composer, and if that is likely to happen, nothing must be allowed to stand in the way of his achievement, because there was never a time for the last two thousand years in which the world has so much needed great creative artists.

"It's not surprising that you should be attracted to him. His grandmother whom you call Aunt Miriam helped me very much when I was younger than Sebastian is now, and his Uncle Emil was my most intimate friend at school and his own father is my most intimate friend to-day. And Sebastian's mother is also a most intimate friend. I had intended to speak to them about Sebastian and you, but I think I won't, because, though I may be able to understand how you feel, they might not be able to. . . . I think they probably would, but they *might* not . . . and therefore I'd rather it was kept a complete secret, so that if as you and Sebastian grow older you find this was all a lovely dream, except for me nobody will know anything about this dream.

"And now listen. I'm not going to make it easy for you and Sebastian to see one another. It may be a year or even longer before you meet again. If you want to convince me that you love him it won't be by pining for his company or behaving as love-sick young people are apt to behave."

"How do they behave?" Corinna asked with profound interest.

"Well, they're apt to moon about and neglect their work and waste time writing and reading endless letters and allow their minds to be so much preoccupied by love that they're no use to themselves or anybody else. Love turns into self-indulgence, and then like

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all self-indulgence it needs a change because the more self indulges itself the more demands it makes. If you love Sebastian and hope to marry him one day, it is your duty to be learning now how to make him a good wife, and that means being both Mary and Martha. You've always been good about the housework you've done, but I want you to do more. So many young women nowadays don't realize that if they want to make a happy married life for themselves they must know how to run a house or a flat or a cottage in the country. Look at Aunt Gabrielle. She's a great and successful French actress, and yet you'd think she'd spent all her life housekeeping. It's only because the young women of our country have lost the tradition that they find it such a burden to be housewives. You may be saying to yourself that to mix up love and housekeeping is very unromantic, but you'll be surprised to find how much romance depends on good cooking. That doesn't mean to say you've got to overestimate the importance of it as Martha did. If you marry an artist you must be prepared to be as much of a Mary as a Martha. We'll have lots of talks about this sort of thing, though we shan't talk at all about Sebastian, and the happier you seem the more I shall believe that you have been granted by God's Grace a wonderful opportunity for happiness which in His Wisdom He seems to withhold from so many. And it is up to you to avail yourself of that Grace and to use it for the greater glory of God and for the health of your own soul. This is an odd place to have chosen for such a discourse," John said, looking round that Le Bourget waiting-room, "but I did not want to lose any time in clearing away the little barrier there inevitably had to be between us until you were able to feel that I could and would understand your point of view and that you could and would understand mine. God bless you, my dearest. And now I think it's time to be moving along to our plane."

John found waiting for him at Hampstead a letter from Alasdair MacPhee to say that he was on his rounds in the islands and would have proposed coming to Tigh nan Ròn but that in view of what was projected he would rather not compromise Mr Ogilvie beforehand. He suggested that they should meet on January 28th where they had met four years ago, at MacLeod's hotel in Portree. Much

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to Corinna's satisfaction the plan for her to go to Erpingham was changed. John had decided to visit the chapel in the wood at Kilcolly; Mairi and Corinna were to go for a few days to visit Mairi's home in Moidart and from there they were to go back together to the island from Portrose.

Elise was rather doleful over the briefness of their stay in London.

"I do think you might allow me more than a couple of nights of your company, John, after being away since September," she complained.

"Well, if I hadn't been called back to Scotland on urgent business we shouldn't have been back till the end of April or even May," he said.

She shook her head.

"And men accuse women of being illogical. Is Corinna to spend all of what little time she has here with the Sterns?" she asked a little huffily.

"No, I'm going to spend all my time with you, Aunt Elise."

John realized Corinna's dread of self-consciousness at Belmore House, and said nothing to disturb her step-grandmother's obvious gratification.

"Poor Miriam's away at Ventnor with Yan and Erika," Leonora told him when he arrived that Sunday evening at Belmore House. "Yan has been having bad bronchitis."

"Surely poor Yan might be granted a commiserative epithet as well as Miriam," John suggested with a smile.

"I think it was Astrid's duty to take her own children to the Isle of Wight," Leonora declared firmly. "Julius will be back any minute. He was conducting Sibelius's Fifth Symphony at Birfield yesterday, and he was lunching with the Bishop after Mass this morning. They were having some diocesan celebration, and Julius was playing his fiddle in the Cathedral. He expected to catch the 3.30 train from Birfield. And now, John, tell me what you make of Sebastian. I had a letter yesterday from him at Monte Cassino which he seems to be liking very much and where he expects to stay at least a month. After that he says he is going to Germany and Poland and finally to Russia. Oh dear, I hope he won't come back with a dictator-complex or a communist-libido. I'm getting pretty good at this Freudian jargon in order to keep my end up with Astrid. She tried to lay me out with the endopsychic censor the

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week before last, and what d'ye think the endopsychic censor turns out to be, John?"

"It always sounds to me very much like the voice of conscience," he replied.

"That's exactly what it is, my dear. Endopsychic censor, indeed!" I doubt if any of the cloven tongues of fire spoke in a vile mixture of Greek and Latin when the apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost at Pentecost," John chuckled. "However, I don't think you need worry about Sebastian. I'm not qualified to speculate whether he will be a great composer, but I've a strong belief he will be a great man."

"It was a pity he couldn't have had longer with you," she sighed.

"It was a disappointment for me," John assured her.

At that moment Monica came into the room to find out why Corinna had not come with her father. She was eight months older, but dark as she was how much more of a little girl she seemed than Corinna. On the other hand, Veronica, now on the edge of eleven, with that trim completeness of her mother, appeared more than her age.

"And Wolfgang is to go to St James's Preparatory School next September," Leonora announced.

"I want to play football properly," Wolfgang explained in a tone that defied anybody to put forward a better reason for going to school.

"All right, darling, but that's no reason why you should dig your heels into my poor carpet," his mother told him. "If you want to do that you'd better go back to the schoolroom. Hark, there's the taxi. Now you can work off some of your energy by helping your father bring in his luggage."

After supper when John had gone off with Julius to his room he asked if Sebastian had mentioned anything about his *Opus One*.

"Op. 1, eh? No, he's said nothing to me. What is it?" Julius asked.

"It's a piano and violin sonata. F major is the key. He gave me an idea of the *adagio* in the second movement on his fiddle. It seemed to me beautiful."

"So easy as that?" Julius asked, knitting his eyebrows.

"Ah, well, he only played the simple melody. Why shouldn't

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it be easy for me to take it in at once? Beethoven didn't disdain a few melodies that seem as beautiful the first time they are heard as ever afterwards."

"John, devoted as I am to you, I cannot accept you as a judge of music," Julius insisted.

"I don't pretend to be, as you know very well," John retorted a little irritably. "And I hope you won't tell Sebastian I've mentioned his sonata to you. He suddenly played the *adagio* in the train before he left us at Cassino."

"Holy Moses," Julius ejaculated. "Like a gypsy at a fair. It sounds as if his Opus One was going to make musical history."

"Blast it, Julius, I wish I hadn't mentioned this sonata," John exclaimed. "If I didn't know you so well I'd vow you were jealous."

"Jealous? Well, my god, that's a good one. Jealous of what?" Julius demanded wrathfully. "Would I be jealous if Wolfgang got hold of enough sugar and butter to make a plate of toffee? And that's what this Op. 1 sounds like."

"Julius," John declared, looking hard at his friend, "you are jealous."

"Of what?"

"Of being able to write Opus One on the outside of a manuscript," John said.

"I wonder if you're right, John. No, hell, I don't think you are. But I *am* jealous *for* him, and I was annoyed when he wrote he intended to go to Germany presently. Even with all these Nazis running around he might be captivated by that atmosphere of music, and suppose he were to return with an admiration of the Germans? They exercise a curious magic over the English, the Americans, and . . . let me face up to it, the Jews. They have a power of corruption such as no other nation possesses, and if Sebastian were to succumb to it . . . there was an idea at one time of his going to Leipzig . . . after all it is a much more obviously suitable place in which to study music than London. But from the moment the German people accepted as their leader this mephitic jack-o'-lantern from the gases of their own decay I was not willing to send Sebastian to Germany. And now he's determined to go."

"If he's feeble enough to succumb to a creature like Hitler his future as an artist is hardly worth bothering about," John argued.

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"Personally I should expect Russia would influence him much more than Germany."

"That's almost as bad," Julius muttered.

"I don't agree," John said. "Sebastian isn't a Bloomsbury intellectual searching for something in which he can believe. If he did succumb to the U.S.S.R. I should certainly be impressed. I'm not convinced that there is any fundamental incompatibility between Christianity and communism. On the contrary, I think that the third phase of Christianity may come from Russia. It doesn't seem to me nearly as bad to believe in no God as to believe in a false God. When the atheistic kenosis is complete the abhorred vacuum must be filled, and I believe it will be filled with the Johannine phase of Christianity. Hitler may be an anti-Christ. It goes against the grain to put him so high; but clearly he has genius of some kind."

"The same kind of genius as that gentleman who drowned all those ladies in baths during the war. He has magnetic power, and he has mesmerized the German nation."

"Which of course is in essence homosexual," John added.

"Exactly."

"I don't think you need worry about Sebastian in Germany," said John. "He certainly isn't homosexual. But tell me, do you really believe that this queer epicene is going to be the German Joan of Arc and so successfully revive its confidence that such a questing beast of a nation will set out once more in pursuit of the phantasm of world domination?"

"I'm dead sure of it," Julius replied. "And it looks as if the Poles, between the devil and the deep sea, are going to put their money on the devil and play into the hands of Germany."

"And the German Catholics are showing themselves feeble," John said. "I told you about that young German who came up to the island. He seemed to me typical of German Catholicism at the present moment. However, I presume we have at least another ten years before the Germans will think themselves strong enough to spring at Europe's throat again and a lot may happen in that time."

"Ten years? I doubt if we have five," Julius said emphatically.

"And I suppose that a hint of internal disruption in Britain would tempt them as those playboys of the Conservative Party

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tempted them in 1914," John added pensively. "However, no doubt we shall have a General Election this autumn and perhaps the country will wake up sufficiently to protest against being governed by jellied eels."

It was a smudgy grey frore January morning when John with Corinna and Mairi waited for the toy steamer to reach the level expanse at the head of Loch Shiel. On such a day the baroque stucco monument to Prince Charles Edward possessed a melancholy grandeur against so indefinite a landscape, and the sombre prismatic sheen of a flock of starlings stabbing with their beaks the sodden ground, the grass of which had been dulled by winter to the sad hue of filemot, made them appear richly plumaged as tanagers against so dreary a monochrome. However, the grey dislusted surface of the loch was also motionless, and this was a relief to Mairi who was eloquent to Corinna about the toy steamer's liveliness when the wind blew hard. About half-way from Glenfinnan John disembarked at the minute pier of Kilcolly, leaving Corinna and Mairi to continue their voyage to Acharacle at the other end of the loch, not far from which was the new house Mairi's father had built.

John had telegraphed to the priest who had succeeded Canon MacLeay at Kilcolly to beg his hospitality for a couple of nights, and Father Hugh MacDonald was on the pier awaiting the arrival of the boat. He was a tall, dark, lantern-jawed man of about forty, obviously a little overcome by the prospect of such an invasion of Kilcolly as John's telegram to him had suggested.

"I'm afraid I'll not be able to make you as comfortable as I should like, Mr Ogilvie. My housekeeper has been ill, and she's away just now for a short holiday in Glasgow. I'm at the mercy of a local girl until she returns."

"Father MacDonald," said John, "will you accord me the greatest hospitality one man can accord another? Will you take me and my comfort for granted? I'm just back from Italy . . . you were at the Scots College in Rome, weren't you? . . . *allora, mi lasci accomodarmi*. Please. You probably know that it was your predecessor who received me into the Church. This is a brief pilgrimage to ask Almighty God to answer a question for me, and it is the hospitality of St Columba's chapel I require. I know what

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a nuisance unexpected guests are in out-of-the-way places, so I've ventured to bring with me a game-pie from Fortnum's, which won't need cooking, a jar of Stilton, and one or two judicious bottles including a bottle of vermouth straight from Torino. Oh yes, and a Prague ham. I think if your hens are laying and your cow is in milk we shall do ourselves fairly well."

"You shouldn't have put yourself to such trouble, Mr Ogilvie, really," the priest protested. "As a matter of fact I was lucky enough to get quite a good lobster for lunch. I hope you like lobster."

"I do indeed, and by equal good fortune one of the judicious bottles is a Chablis which I think the lobster will appreciate."

By the time they reached the chapel house, a low white building roofed with black Ballachulish slate, by the edge of the wood looking out across the loch to the wild country on the other side, Father MacDonald was at ease with his visitor and the invasion had become a pleasant event in his isolated existence.

"Have you the Gaelic, Mr Ogilvie?" the priest asked when John greeted in her own tongue Flora the maid who was simmering, almost shimmering with shyness.

"Just a very little to speak with, Father, but nothing at all to speak of."

"Will I show you your bedroom? I'm afraid the roof is terribly low."

"Yes, but I'm not so tall as you, Father MacDonald," John replied. "And anyway I always find a low roof a corrective for idle dreaming."

The present chapel of St Columba was not an ancient building, and the grove of alien larches in which it stood were not more than forty years old. It was an ugly building with a wedding-cake altar and coloured statues of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Sacred Heart in the worst sentimental naturalistic style of the Catholic repository. The Stations of the Cross were tawdry chromolithographs. There was barely room to seat in the greatest discomfort on narrow deal benches the congregation that crowded it every Sunday at Mass, and at the back of the chapel a space had been left in which those who, after tramping five or six miles from their remote crofts, could not find seats were able to kneel on the flagged floor.

Yet the name Kilcolly corrupted from the Gaelic *Cill na coille*—

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church of the wood—and the foundations of a minute eighteenth-century church close by the modern chapel, showed that for more than twelve hundred years God had been worshipped on this spot and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered here. The Reformation swept Scotland with an iconoclastic phrenzy which had no counterpart in England. When the madness subsided there was left hardly any outward visible form of the Catholic Faith. Nevertheless, whereas in England the continuity of that Faith was preserved only by the devotion, loyalty, and courage of individuals, although England was allowed by the Divine mercy to keep most of her fanes, in Scotland whole districts in the Highlands escaped all except the legal aftermath of the religious phrenzy of the Reformation. Owing to the pusillanimity of those in Rome responsible for Propaganda these districts were left for years without priests to serve them, but priestless they kept the Faith so that, when in the seventeenth century a few priests were able to reach the Highlands and Islands and minister again, there were blessed districts which could claim that in all essentials the Reformation had left them untouched. Such a district was Kilcolly.

When John made his communion at St Columba's in the twilight of the second morning of his stay there were beside himself in the congregation half a dozen old women, and as he passed up the aisle to kneel at the altar these bowed heads wrapped in faded tartan shawls seemed to be diffusing active rays of faith generated by the ardour of their own adoration.

"It was a great spiritual privilege," John said to his host after dinner that evening, "to be received into the Church here."

The nine o'clock news had concluded a quarter of an hour of polite information with an announcement in those tones of super-courteous respect which are reserved by announcers as a tribute to mortality that the National Council for the Disposition of the Dead had been constituted.

"I wonder what they'll do with the National Government?" John had speculated when his host switched off and they pulled their chairs a little closer to the fire.

"It must have been quite an event for Canon MacLeay," Father MacDonald observed.

"Not more so than every Mass he said and every sick call he answered," John said. "That *was* the spiritual privilege—to be

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what I should prefer to call an incident in the history of at least twelve hundred years. Those old women at Mass this morning filled me with the same kind of awe as that mighty monastery of Monte Cassino, which I visited for the second time last October."

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow what you mean, Mr Ogilvie."

"The whole past was in their present. That's what I mean. David Rayner the novelist once sent me a picture-postcard of Monte Cassino to say that the place was rotten with the past. He was one of those self-tormented introverts who are increasing faster and faster under modern conditions and who, I suppose, feel a grudge against the past for their own thwarted existence in the present."

"It must be very difficult for them, poor souls," the priest commented sympathetically, but a little vaguely. John thought it as well to cut his reflections short.

"Let me fill up your glass, Father," he suggested.

"Will you allow me to ask you a rather direct question, Mr Ogilvie?" said the priest after a moment or two of silence during which they both sipped the green Chartreuse from one of those judicious bottles John had brought with him.

"Ask away," John invited.

"I know you're great on Home Rule for Scotland. Don't you think it might be very bad for us?" Father MacDonald asked.

"For Catholics you mean?"

"Yes, I think we'd have a big job over our schools for one thing."

"Well, I don't believe there's any immediate prospect of Home Rule in this country, and I think if it ever does come it will come through young men who'll be saying 'a plague on both your houses' to Catholics and Presbyterians alike. I think it might involve a struggle with secularism, but that should help Catholics and Presbyterians to draw closer for a common defence of Christianity. I must say I have been a little humiliated by the better fight the German Protestants are putting up than the German Catholics against these lunatic Nazis. I can't help thinking that if the German Catholics rejected any possibility of a concordat with the National Socialists they would clear the air. It's obvious this creature Hitler will try to incorporate Austria in Germany at the first opportunity and that will complicate things more than ever."

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"I think it's a mistake for the clergy to mix themselves up in politics, Mr Ogilvie."

"But if the clergy believe what they claim to believe, Father MacDonald, how can the clergy help mixing themselves up in politics? I don't mean by that, backing one political party against another. I'm using politics in the sense of all government. It's not mixing in politics to reject National Socialism as a threat to Christianity and as such to fight it."

"But as Catholics might we not say that the lip-service paid to Christianity in Scotland and England is just as great a threat?" the priest suggested. "And what about Bolshevism?"

"I don't agree. I'll admit that the lip-service paid to Christianity by this country is nauseating, but the fact remains that in spite of the moral and mental laziness which infects this post-war age there is an uneasy sense of spiritual delinquency. The Bolsheviks have boldly abolished God in much the same way as the Jacobins abolished Him. That doesn't seem to me to matter nearly as much as proclaiming a false God, which is what the Germans have done. Nazism is a perverted form of German Protestantism. Hitler is in the tradition of Luther. Perhaps that is why German Protestants are producing a larger number of really tough opponents than German Catholics. They recognize more clearly the menace of National Socialism to themselves. On the other hand communism is a perverted form of Catholicism, and therefore Catholics are more eager to fight it than National Socialism. But if communism established itself firmly and felt secure enough not to dread clerical influence, I think it might provide a revivifying political and economic opportunity for Catholicism. A study of the Italian *risorgimento* clearly reveals the utter failure of the clergy from Pope Pius IX downwards to take advantage of an opportunity to lead a social revolution which might have saved Europe from the condition in which it now exists, so much dazed by falling over one precipice that it does not realize how fast it is sliding down the shale to crash over another."

"Well, Mr Ogilvie, I'm afraid I still think the clergy shouldn't take any part in politics. And I'm afraid I still think Home Rule would affect our position in Scotland very unfavourably," Father MacDonald declared.

"I shan't try to convert you," John said. "The Clanranald

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MacDonalds have a right to claim that they kept the faith of Bruce and Wallace and fought in the last fight for Scotland."

The next day John boarded the toy steamer and went to Acharracle to fetch Corinna and Mairi. The house Mairi's father had built with the help and encouragement of the Department of Agriculture had a grey asbestos roof, a pitch-pine staircase, a porch covered with corrugated iron, gaudy over-polished linoleum on the floor of every room, and all the other aesthetic comforts that indicated the ability of the most remote Highland districts to move in step with a brave new Woolworth world. That the inhabitants of this new house still had to carry their household water a quarter or a mile from the nearest pump, use a bucket in a packing-case fifty yards from the house for the needs of nature or share the byre with the cow, and depend upon bad and expensive paraffin for their lighting did not in the opinion of the Department of Agriculture detract in the least from the merit of their notions for improving housing conditions in rural areas. So long as the great dovecotes of bureaucracy had empty pigeon-holes for the reports of commissions and committees, the problem of the overcrowding of urban areas and the depopulation of rural areas could be left to solve itself.

Mairi was very much her father's daughter. Donald Alan Macdonald was a tall handsome man of about sixty with a full grey moustache that turned up fiercely at either end and a florid complexion. Her mother was a trim little woman with faded light-brown hair. However, the person in the house who interested John more than anybody was Mrs Macdonald's father, who had not a word of English. He was an old man of eighty with a snow-white beard, skin like a La France rose, and flashing sea-blue eyes. He was still as active as he had been in his twenties, and the leader in every operation on the croft. The first at the fank for sheep-dipping, the neatest clipper of wool, the most active with the pitchfork and the hayrake, he could guide the plough and scatter the seed more truly than any man in the township. In his guernsey and yachting-cap he looked like an old salt. In fact he had been an inshore fisherman until the destruction of long-line fishing by the trawlers of the big English companies who, with support from the representatives of vested interests in Parliament, were willing and able to break any law, to disregard any limit, and if it should be necessary to starve every West Highland and Island crofter

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rather than allow one city-dweller to go without his fish and chips. Luckily old Hector MacEachan loved the land as much as the sea. He loved, too, his fellow-men. He loved God. There was one thing, however, he hated, and that was his son-in-law's Department of Agriculture house. He had a corner in the kitchen beside the range where he was warm enough, but he would much sooner have been sitting over a great fire in the middle of the sanded floor of an old black house, watching the reek find its way out through a hole in the thatch and listening to ancient songs and tales of the Prince's year, of the war-pipes and the white cockade when Moidart, Appin, Keppoch, and Lochaber threatened a throne and frightened London.

*Sound the silver whistle,
The son of my king has come to Alba.*

That was the song old Hector sang for John in the kitchen of Donald Alan's fine new house with the asbestos slates and lush linoleum under the shrewd gaze of His Holiness Pope Pius XI as it appeared in a tinsel- and glass-bedecked oleograph on the pitch-pine matchboarding.

The old man went off early upstairs and presently through the pitch-pine ceiling was heard a steady drone.

"It's my grandfather saying his prayers," Mairi explained. "He'll be an hour or more at them—before he goes to his bed."

"Ach, the *bodach* doesn't like the new house at all," said Donald Alan. "Not at all. He's very old-fashioned. He doesn't think there's any need for progress at all. Just doesn't believe in it," Donald Alan chuckled.

"What exactly is the advantage of your new house over the thatched one I remember so well?" John asked.

Donald Alan took the pipe out of his mouth and stared at his guest.

"What's the advantage of our new house? Man, it's modderan. It's so modderan."

"Yes, it's modern," John agreed. "But is that necessarily an advantage?"

"Ah, I believe you're very old-fashioned yourself, Mr Ogilvie," said Donald Alan, shaking his head. His pipe had gone out, and he felt in his pocket for a box of matches. Not finding one, he eyed the range balefully. "*A Dhia*, now," he grumbled, "that's

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the worst of these rainches. Anybody can't lift a peat and light his pipe the way he would be lighting it once upon a time."

Corinna twisted a spill from an old *People's Journal* and having kindled it at the range offered it to Mairi's father with a laughing remark in Gaelic.

"*Móran tainge, m'eudail.* Many thanks, my dear. Ah, well, well, Mr Ogilvie, it's herself that speaks the Gaelic right enough. Not a taste of the English. Not a taste of it. And Moidart Gaelic is the best of all."

Mairi looked at the clock and then at Corinna, who yawned widely to demonstrate to the world that it was of her own free will she went to bed now.

"My goodness, Mr Ogilvie," Donald Alan exclaimed when Corinna and Mairi had left the kitchen, "what a change in that lassie of yours since we last saw her. Och, she's quite the young lady now."

"Indeed yes," Mrs Macdonald agreed, from the wooden arm-chair in which she was nodding. "And a very beautiful young lady too. Just a picture."

"Ay, just a proper picture," her husband echoed, puffing away at his pipe.

Soon after this John retired to the sitting-room where a bed had been made up for him, and sat down to write a letter to Sebastian:

*As from Tigh nan Ròn
January 24, 1935*

My dear Sebastian,

I am sending this Poste Restante, Rome, because I gathered from your mother you might be moving on fairly soon from Monte Cassino, I understand on your way to Germany. There's a good deal I have to write about. So you must put up with a longish letter.

First of all I must let you know that Corinna has told me about herself and you. As a matter of fact I asked her if she had not fallen in love with you and I'm glad to say she told me exactly how things stood. My first impulse was to tell your father and mother and possibly my sister Prudence, but on second thoughts I decided to say nothing.

I don't have to assure you that there is no man whom I should

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like to see Corinna's husband so much as yourself, and I believe I can say that your father and mother would desire nobody better as a wife for you. Obviously, however, such a happy ending cannot be profitably discussed for at least another three years, and at your age and hers the years are long, crowded, and very mutable. Therefore at the outset I want you clearly to understand that if you find in retrospect your fortnight together at Citrano turning into a midwinter's night dream you are not to feel hampered by any sentimental notions of constancy. I shall make it my business to impress on Corinna that she must expect you to change and that she must expect to change herself. It would indeed be a miracle if you did not both change, for I must insist that you do not see each other again for at least a year and that meanwhile you do not write to one another. I know this latter demand may seem unfair, but in making it I am being fair to both of you. There is nothing so pitiable as the correspondence of two lovers who have grown apart and yet from habit continue to pretend on paper that they have not. And if one has changed and the other not, it is even more pitiable. Young people lack the experience to know what an unpleasant process falling out of love can be. Not for everybody of course. Some persons can fall out of love without a qualm. But I don't fancy that either of you is that kind of a person.

I shall be frank and say that apart from the dangers of a long correspondence to yourselves I do not want Corinna's mind to be taken up by writing letters to you and waiting for letters from you. She has quite enough to occupy her with her French and Italian and English, with a certain amount of Latin and Greek, with her history, and with her domestic work. This fifteenth year of hers is a critical one in education, and I propose to keep her hard at it.

So much for Corinna. Then there is yourself to consider. You might easily find that writing to Corinna was becoming more and more of a tax on your time, even although you were happier writing to her than doing anything else. If you feel you want to write to Corinna put that unsatisfied desire into music. I think you're wise to explore Germany and Russia, not to mention Poland. Your father is a little worried what effect Germany may have on you. Your mother is more nervous about Russia.

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I don't believe you're going to worry what effect either has on anything except your music. What I do know is that I shall be immensely interested to hear from you what you think about Germany and Russia. I have had since earliest childhood a very intense antipathy toward everything German, and though immediately after the war I was so much exasperated by the stupidity of the way we treated them that I began to wonder if there was not something to be said for the German point of view, that doubt soon faded away with the realization that it was not the terms imposed upon them at Versailles which was the real mortification but the fact that they had not been able at Potsdam to impose very much harsher terms on their enemies. I think this persecution of the Jews is positive proof that in a few years' time the Germans aspire to be in a position to make war again. Whether they will succeed depends on ourselves, on France, and on the United States. I can't say I feel optimistic about the future. I don't know why I'm writing this, unless it is to prepare myself in advance to hear from you that the last thing the Germans want is another war and that I am a barnacled bit of intellectual wreckage from 1914-1918. But I am looking forward to your impressions about Russia. It may be a mental hang-over from drinking too deep of the Dostoevskian spring in the first decade of this century, but I can't get out of my head that there must be a Divine purpose in the Russian Revolution, even though at the moment it may not be exactly apparent.

Now I have a confession to make. I spoke to your father about your violin and piano sonata in F major and told him that it was to be your Opus 1. I realize I oughtn't to have said anything about it before you did, and you'll have to forgive me if you're vexed by the indiscretion. To tell the truth, I was so anxious to steer clear of any possible hint of Corinna that I concentrated rather too much on you!

I hope I've made it clear to you in this letter how happy I shall be if time ripens this budding love, and equally that if it fails to flower I shall accept such a failure as in the natural order of things. I do hope that you understand I am as much concerned for you as I am for Corinna. I said to your father, who was in one of his rather severe moods, that while I was not qualified to prophesy you would be a great composer, I firmly believed you

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would be a great man. And that, my dearest Sebastian, I re-affirm to you. Write to me sometime when you're in the mood and drop the 'uncle' in front of

Your affectionate
John

After he had finished this letter John reflected for a while and then took up his pen to write another.

As from Tigh nan Ròn
January 24, '35

My dearest Miriam,

I was disappointed to miss you in London, and am now on my way back to the island with Corinna and Mairi, staying at the moment in the house of Mairi's parents in Moidart.

I am going to confide in you something which must be a secret between you and me, as strictly kept as that secret you and I have kept for nearly thirty-four years. When Sebastian came to stay with us in Citrano my stepson Arthur, with an acuteness of observation lacking in myself, pointed out that he and Corinna were on the way to a love-affair. I realized that this was true and luckily an urgent appeal from Scotland to intervene in a political matter gave me a good reason for coming back at once. I asked Corinna when we reached Paris if she was in love with Sebastian and she told me she was. I had to decide whether to take her seriously, and I did. I think I was right. I have just written to tell Sebastian that I know and have ruled out any meeting for at least a year, and also any correspondence. I have tried to make it clear to both of them that it will be surprising if this attraction survives separation and that neither of them must blame the other if it does not, nor blame himself or herself either.

I have a feeling that you will not think I am being preposterous in taking it as seriously as I do at their age. Remembering you and me, I could not, I simply could not do anything else. If you could love me at seventeen, why should not Corinna at fourteen love Sebastian? When I look back at my life and contemplate how much you have given to me, how can I help hoping that Sebastian will be able to give as much to Corinna? Oh yes, I know it'll probably dissolve into nothing, this boy-and-girl love,

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but I could not bring myself to burst the airy iridescent bubble, and so I have done no more than blow it out of sight, with a hope, and a deep desire too, that it will not burst of its own accord.

Obviously I must for both their sakes help them to avoid the danger of one side of love by keeping them apart, but I think that is all I should be expected to do. I have not said a word to Julius and Leonora because Corinna will probably seem much more childish to them than she seems to me, and I hope you won't think I'm being unfair to them. I await your verdict on my attitude over this business with a good deal of eagerness and a little trepidation.

My dearest love to you.

John

The next day Hector MacEachan told John that he wanted him to meet an old man who lived by himself in a small wooden bothy at the edge of the township that he might hear of a vision which this old man had been accorded by God. As Iain a'bhothan, as he was called, that is John of the Bothy, had no teeth, Hector thought it would be advisable for Corinna to come and translate what Mr Ogilvie might find his difficult Gaelic.

"I hope you don't mind, sir," said Mairi, "but my grandfather's terribly set upon your meeting Iain a'bhothan. He was quite vexed at me when I said you wouldn't be wanting to waste your time so."

So John and his daughter set out with old Hector along the rough road to the bothy, Hector walking at a great pace and rattling away to Corinna in Gaelic even faster so that John was soon adrift in the conversation.

"What's he telling you, Corinna?"

"He's telling me it was along this road that his great-great-grandfather ran to see the Prince when he came to Borrodale, and other things that happened then."

In spite of the cold weather Iain a'bhothan was sitting on the step of his small wooden bothy and smoking a pipe when the guests arrived. He was a little man, clean-shaven with a close-cropped head of white hair, a snub nose, merry blue eyes, and an expression of intense benignity. He had spent a long life working on the roads and now, entirely alone in the world and drawing near to ninety, he lived in this bothy on the old-age pension with a camp-

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bed, two chairs, a small table, a stove, some crockery, a candlestick, a crucifix, and a silver turnip-watch. The last two hung upon the bare wooden wall above his bed. The other walls were pasted over with a motley of old almanacks, Christmas cards, and advertisements cut out of newspapers.

Iain invited his guests in. John and Corinna were given the chairs. He and Hector sat on the bed.

John produced from his hip-pocket a flask of whisky.

"*Glé mhath! glé mhath!*" Hector ejaculated in quick approval, and Iain showed his toothless gums in a broad smile of anticipation as he went to a small hanging cupboard and produced a dram glass. Good healths and great healths were solemnly intoned. The whisky was drunk with reverence and Corinna was invited to have a cup of tea.

When the preliminary courtesies and hospitalities had been exhausted Hector called on Iain to relate his vision. The old man rose and faced the company.

Corinna translated for her father as he began his tale.

"He was standing where he is now looking at that picture stuck over the mantelshelf."

The picture was a coloured supplement from some paper representing a young woman in a sun-bonnet under a hawthorn in prodigal blossom offering a carrot to a donkey on the other side of a stile and entitled *No more to-day, Neddy*.

"Suddenly that picture and all the other pictures faded away and the wall above the mantelshelf began to glow with a strange blue light," Corinna went on. "Presently he could see a beautiful green glen with trees on either side and a mountain at the far end with a golden light behind it. And when he looked closer at the glen he saw that it was filled with benches like a church, and the benches were full of people in white clothing and they were all praying, but he could not see their faces. And he said to himself, 'Why are all these people praying?'"

"And the light behind the mountain grew brighter and over the top of the mountain came the Holy Ghost."

"*An Spiorad Naoimh, an Spiorad Naoimh,*" Hector repeated, crossing himself.

"And the Holy Ghost came walking down the mountain, and when Iain looked some of the benches were empty and he said to

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himself, 'Why are some of the benches empty? Where have they gone?' And the Holy Ghost came walking down between the benches, and the people in white bowed down, and though Iain could not see their faces he knew that many of them were crying. And Iain said to himself, 'Why are they crying? Are they crying because some of the benches are empty and the people gone?'

"And the Holy Ghost was wearing the most beautiful coat anybody could imagine. It was purple and gold and silver and red and blue and yellow, all the colours you can imagine and all flashing in the sun, and below this coat the Holy Ghost was wearing . . ."

Corinna stopped.

"*Dé rud?*" she asked, obviously unable to believe she was understanding Iain correctly.

"Moleskin trousers," she turned to tell her father in amazement.

"That's probably the most luxurious article of clothing he can imagine," John suggested.

"And just when the Holy Ghost seemed to be coming out of this beautiful glen into Iain's bothy the vision faded away."

"Say to him," John told his daughter, "that he is a happy man to have beheld such a vision, and thank him for telling it to us."

The flask was produced again. Good healths and great healths were again solemnly intoned. The whisky was drunk with reverence.

"Father, do you think he really saw the Holy Ghost in moleskin trousers?" Corinna asked on their way back from the bothy.

"I am perfectly sure he did," John replied.

"But you don't think the Holy Ghost does actually wear moleskin trousers?"

"I don't think the Holy Ghost is actually plumaged like a dove," John said. "But Iain saw the Holy Ghost in moleskin trousers just as Blake, you remember, said you could see

*A World in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And Eternity in an hour."*

Corinna and Mairi went immediately to their cabin on board the *Lochiel* when they reached Portrose. John made his way to

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the little hotel, where he was pleasantly surprised to find that Alasdair MacPhee was the only occupant of the smoking-room. They pulled a couple of the broken-sprung leather armchairs nearer to the fireplace, above which the gilt mirror, tarnished with age and tobacco-smoke and sea-damp, dimly reflected the bluish-green interior.

"Nothing has changed here since we first met on that frosty January night four years ago, Alasdair. The weather is milder this evening," John observed. "That is all."

"No, nothing has changed, Mr Ogilvie," Alasdair agreed. "And nothing has changed in Scotland either."

"And you're going to change it, eh?" John asked.

"Mr Ogilvie, pretty nearly the last words I said to you in this room was a question. I asked, if I came to you with some young men willing to die, would you accept the responsibility of planning how their lives could serve best the object for which they were offered. Well, the young men are waiting. What is your answer now?"

"I told you then that the time was not come to exact death," John replied.

"Yes, but you told you would lead such young men when the time did come. I told you I would hold you to your word. Well, the time has come."

"I don't agree," John said.

"Ach, I knew fine in my heart you wouldn't agree," said Alasdair bitterly. "You'll be like Archie Beaton. He was for aye flyting and jeering at the young men of Scotland and putting them up as a lot of bletherers beside the young men of Ireland, and as soon as he was after seeing that it was a'ction at last he began with his damned 'go slow, boys' and 'go steady, boys' as if we were shifting a grand piano up a narrow staircase."

"Is it assassination you're contemplating?" John asked. "If it is, I say the same as Archie Beaton."

"No, no," Alasdair exclaimed impatiently. "That's been rejected weeks ago."

"I'm glad to hear it. The only thing assassination has ever achieved has been to help evil. Plenty of good men have been assassinated, to the detriment of their country; but the assassination of the worst of men has never helped a good cause or hindered an evil one."

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"Assassination is out of it," Alasdair repeated. "And we've rejected the plan to blow up the headquarters of Imperial Chemicals or any other of those big business concerns. We realized it would savour of sacrilege in the eyes of the great majority of Scots if we interfered with business."

"I won't ask you what you have decided to do; but if it's anything which will involve the death of innocent people I'll have nothing to do with it."

"Who *is* innocent that stands by and let's his country die?" Alasdair demanded.

"That's good fanaticism," John commented. "But it's bad logic. These people are not aware that their country is dying, and killing a few ignorant people will not teach a mass of others just as ignorant."

"Ignorant people were killed in the Easter Rising," Alasdair argued. "The justification for that was the willingness with which those young Irishmen gave their own lives."

"No, I think the justification was the fervid conviction they had that the deliberate sacrifice of themselves would redeem their country," John said.

"We believe the same."

"Alasdair, Alasdair, it's not a tenable belief in Scotland as Scotland is now. Will you study the figures of every election the Scottish Nationalists have fought? They offer deplorable evidence of the country's complacency and caution. When half the constituencies of Scotland return Nationalist members and the English continue to ignore the political evidence, then it may serve a useful purpose to bring matters to a head by violence which cannot be ignored; but it's too soon for violence now. Forcible demonstrations of opinion? Yes, by all means. If you can muster enough young men to march into every school in Scotland at a given hour and tear up in front of the pupils the English history-books from which they are taught, and tear down the infernal pictures on the schoolroom walls by which their imagination is stunted and debased and corrupted to the advantage of industrialism, if you can stage such a demonstration, why, I believe it would be fruitful. If you raid islands like Rum and Eigg which remain landlord's toys while nearly a thousand islanders have been waiting for the small-holdings they applied for fifteen years ago, if you run the deer from the

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forests until the Forestry Commission is compelled to plant their asparagus and spinach not on good grazing land as in Glenshiel but in the real wastes and wildernesses of our country, if you can ruin the salmon-fishing in every river and loch in the country until trawlers are kept out of the Minch and Moray Firth and forbidden to fish within thirteen miles of the coast, if you'll seize a Glasgow or Edinburgh close and rub the landlords' noses in the bugs and lice, yes, and if you like give them castor-oil and invite them to test their own sanitary accommodation, if you'll do any of these things—all right, but try to seize Edinburgh Castle or Stirling Castle by force of arms and be hanged for shooting a sentry or a policeman or killing passers-by in blowing up one of the ant-heaps of the pismires of big business, and you'll find that your plan to restore Scotland to life will be a sooterkin, if you know what that is."

"I don't know."

"A sooterkin is an abortion brought on by sitting on a hot stove, and you'll just be sitting on a hot stove so far as helping Scotland goes."

"This wasn't the way you talked four years ago, Mr Ogilvie."

"No, because I believed then that the sacrifice of blood might achieve its purpose. I no longer believe it. The National Government had not been elected when we last talked together in this room. Did the Scottish voters lag behind the English voters in falling for the confidence trick worked on them by High Finance? They did not. And you know there's a great deal to be said for constitutional rebellion. I consider that Parnell did more to win Ireland her freedom than any single man. These young men would have sacrificed themselves to no purpose unless Parnell had preceded them. Emmet gave his life that Ireland might live, but Parnell was not his predecessor, and for many weary years Emmet's life seemed to have been given in vain. Where's your Scottish Parnell? Where's your Scottish O'Connell? If it comes to that, where's your Scottish Redmond or Healy?"

"The English have had their lesson over Ireland. If Scotland returned a majority of Scottish Nationalists we'd have the kind of piddling Home Rule they have in Northern Ireland by the following session. But that's no good. The Home Rule of the Six Counties is merely an opportunity to enable a set of gangsters to get more graft than they could manage as County Councillors. With all

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the religious prejudice they've imported to reinforce political prejudice I don't believe the Stormont jerrymanderers would dare offer a plebiscite to decide the question of Partition. They're on a level in politics with a trust like Imperial Chemicals or Imperial Tobacco. They're the real corner-boys of Ireland, for they've cornered everything, including the worst police methods of Fascism and Bolshevism. The O.G.P.U. has very little on the Ulster Specials. We do not want a Home Rule in Scotland like the Home Rule of Northern Ireland. It stinks to Heaven. Whitehall can be maddening, but Whitehall would never intern men for years without trial, without telling them of what they were accused or the evidence against them. Those Stormont gangsters have too often only released men from the hulks in which they shut them up to die or go mad. With Home Rule of that type in this country I wouldn't trust some of our Scottish business gangsters not to intern every true patriot in the country. The English have not yet recovered in world opinion from turning loose the Black and Tans in Ireland; but it was Lloyd George, a Welshman, Hamar Greenwood, a Canadian, and John Anderson, a Scot, who did their dirty work for them, and it was decent English opinion voiced by men like Asquith which in the end prevailed."

"You'll excuse me, Mr Ogilvie, but I think it's you who's being illogical now," said Alasdair. "You say at one moment that we mustn't precipitate matters by violence because the country must act constitutionally by electing Nationalist Members of Parliament, and then a moment afterwards you say that Home Rule gained like that wouldn't be worth having."

"I'm afraid I always get carried away when I think of Lord Craigavon and his gang and the way English and Scottish Tory politicians scratch their backs for them while they themselves lick the boots of the Tory politicians. What I'm really trying to say is that any violence now is still premature. The National Party of Scotland has not shown itself capable of influencing Scottish opinion to the extent of doing more than just managing not to forfeit a deposit or two at elections. One reason for this is that the Party fails to make any appeal to youth because those in control of it are too old. I don't mean necessarily in years; I mean in outlook. They go clanking about in the armour of Bruce or Wallace like middle-aged lawyers at a fancy-dress ball. I'm not enamoured of sentimental

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Jacobites, but at least the costume is easier to wear. The Party requires a drastic purge. Colonel Pride must deal with General Vanity and Major Conceit. There must be an end of this talk of wanting nothing more than to manage our own local affairs. The youth of this country is not going to the barricades to control Glasgow trams or Edinburgh parks or Aberdeen drifters or Dundee marmalade without reference to Whitehall. There must be an end of this talk about leaving our foreign affairs and our taxation and our armed forces to the Westminster Parliament. We don't want to sit in two Parliaments. We want big brains not big backsides to be the qualification for members of the Scottish Parliament. We want the Treaty of Union torn up, and if Scotland elects for a fresh Treaty those of us who would sooner have no Treaty of Union will have to abide by the country's decision. We don't want to pledge ourselves to be members of the British Commonwealth of Nations in advance. We must leave that to a sovereign Parliament of Scotland to decide. In a word, the National Party must demand the complete dissolution of the partnership with England before any more attempts are made to patch up a deed of partnership the provisions of which one of the partners has consistently violated through two centuries. If a fresh deed of partnership is drawn up and approved by a sovereign Parliament of Scotland, then we must abide by that and do our vigilant utmost to secure that the provisions are honoured by both the partners.

"I gave you an outline of my Scottish Utopia when we talked together in this room four years ago and my ideas are far too radical for me to expect that they would be carried out by any partnership between the present kind of country that either England or Scotland is."

"Indeed no," Alasdair ejaculated.

"You may remember that for my Utopia to work I wanted the Royal power in the peculiarly Scottish sense of Royal power restored. Think what a Scottish King like the present Prince of Wales might effect! All through these last four years I have been haunted by that fancy. Rumour—probably quite untruly—says he dislikes the notion of succession to the Throne to which he will succeed. Of course, it's outside all fancy, but suppose he *did* abdicate, what a King of Scotland he might make! I've just been staying in Moidart and while I was there I asked for God's Grace

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to give you the right advice, Alasdair, when we met. I asked for it at the chapel twelve years ago where I was received into the Catholic Church, in a spot where for at least twelve hundred years the people worshipping in it have worshipped God in fundamentally the same way. It is naturally impossible for any Jacobite not to be profoundly moved by the atmosphere of Moidart, but I was not moved sentimentally. I was moved by the political value of philosophic Jacobitism. Those wretched Dictators who are disturbing Europe to-day are the result of starving Europe of kingship in the Jacobite sense of kingship. Scottish kingship was always democratic kingship, and Jacobite kingship was democratic kingship. Jacobitism was overthrown by the same kind of forces which overthrew that poor impotent Labour Government in 1931. In its own feeble way that Labour Government did represent the hope of the people of Britain to attain a better world for themselves. No monarch in Britain since James II and VII has dared to attempt to represent the people. Frederick, Prince of Wales, played with the idea, but he was just Poor Fred and died before the great Whig oligarchs had to exert themselves to dethrone him. I doubt if any King of this country ever will attempt again to represent the people. I daresay the present Prince of Wales would like to have a try, but if he ever does he'll find the City of London, which has succeeded to the power of the Whig oligarchs, too strong for him, and his political councillors will see to it that he steers clear of what they will call politics but is actually economics.

"However, this is wandering off into dreams. I haven't shaken off the Moidart air. I want to come now to the real argument against precipitate action at present. Have you been following European developments carefully?"

"Och, no more than to see that we'll just be dragged into one of England's wars again before we know where we are," Alasdair muttered.

"If war comes within the next year it would be one of England's wars, but it is one of England's wars I would passionately support, because such a war would prevent the much greater war which will come in perhaps another eight or ten years from now. Unfortunately I'm afraid England hopes to get out of war for herself by indirectly encouraging war between Germany and Russia. England may be successful, though it's really not fair to call this *olla podrida*

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of careerist British politicians England. My own feeling is that England will not be successful and that we shall have another world war. If we do, it must inevitably mean the break-up of the world as we know it to-day. You're not old enough to realize how much was destroyed, both good and bad, by the last world war. Another cataclysm, which with the development of the aeroplane is bound to be much more destructive externally, is likely to be even more destructive of accepted beliefs. A Welsh friend of mine said to me recently that he wasn't bothering about Welsh Nationalism and didn't know why I was bothering about Scottish Nationalism, because the second world war which he believed inevitable must mean the break-up of Britain into its component parts. He added that he didn't know why the Irish were worrying about Partition, because Partition could not possibly survive the aftermath of the kind of war we were in for. And I agree with him, Alasdair. Now, if this great war does come, I cannot believe that the ruling class of Britain will succeed in getting us into a war on the same side as Germany because, thank God, there are enough of them able to grasp that the fall of France would in due course inevitably lead to a war to the death between England and Germany, with doubtful results for England if Russia came in with Germany. So I am going to assume that in the next war Britain—and I say Britain now—and Germany will be on different sides.

"Furthermore I believe that, whatever we may think about the behaviour of England in the past or the present, we Scots cannot afford not to give our full support to the English cause. Yes, I see you're waiting to contradict me, but before you do I want you to contemplate what a Germanized Europe would entail for civilization. You should read some modern German philosophers, historians, and social theorists. You should read this preposterous farrago of Hitler's called *Mein Kampf*. If the German people are capable of being doped by such illiterate balderdash into following the lead of this man, it offers a terrifying prospect, because it means that one madman is going to lead seventy million more madmen amuck, and that's going to make a hell of a mess of the world. And don't forget that if these madmen should win, their madness will become the sanity of the future.

"With that possibility of another great war before us, and it really ought to be called a probability, I'm afraid I don't feel that I can

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support the open violence which I know you are contemplating. I doubt if I would support it at this moment even if I knew that it would have the effect you hope on the people of Scotland; but when I am completely convinced that it would not, I think it is wrong to give the Germans an opportunity of fancying that Scotland in the war they are planning might play the part they hoped Ireland would play in keeping Britain out of it in 1914 and thus isolating us in Europe, with a view to a trial of strength with us later."

"Yes, but suppose there is no great world war presently, Mr Ogilvie? Are we to do nothing, just on the chance of there being one?"

"I'll counter with another question, Alasdair. If I came to you with a sum of money provided by the German Secret Service for the purpose of fomenting violence in Scotland, would you accept that money from Germany?"

Alasdair paused for a moment.

"I believe I would, Mr Ogilvie. As I see it, Scotland is dying and I would have no right to refuse anything which might restore her to life."

"My dear boy, a live Scotland would be no use in a dead Europe, and a Germanized Europe would be a dead Europe."

"Then the Irish were wrong to accept German help in the war?" Alasdair pressed.

It was John's turn now to pause before replying.

"I think it was very nearly a betrayal of the West," he said at last. "And I think if Lloyd George were impeached by the West for the crime of the Black and Tans he might plead that betrayal in his own defence. Yet the English treatment of Ireland had been so consistently outrageous for four hundred years that had I been an Irishman I would have accepted help from the Devil himself if I believed it would set my country free. And in fairness to Ireland it must be remembered that the last war presented itself only as a struggle between two rival Imperiums. That will not be the case if another war breaks out. That would be a struggle between two evolutionary forces."

"Just a choice between two evils in fact," Alasdair said quickly.

"No, I'd rather say between a potential good, often seeming hopelessly corrupt and incapable of a higher destiny but still clinging, however feebly, to a belief in mankind's redemption, and evil

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absolute. I am sure that National Socialism is satanic."

"Plenty people think Bolshevism is satanic," said Alasdair.

"Bolshevism is at any rate an experiment by the Russian people at their own expense. National Socialism is designed by the Germans to be an experiment at the expense of other peoples."

"Anyway, whatever we do you'll not approve of it, Mr Ogilvie. That's pretty clear," Alasdair murmured, frowning.

"I've tried to give you my reasons. They may not seem good reasons. You'll decide that for yourselves. If you reject my advice, that doesn't mean I won't do all I can to defend you."

"Ay, I'm sure you would," said the younger man, with a fleeting look of what seemed a kind of thwarted affection. "Well, I dare-say you'll be wanting to go aboard. I'll walk along with you as far as the boat."

"I thought we'd have tea together here before I went on board," said John. "You'd rather not, eh?"

"Och, yes, of course I will. I'm being a bit babyish, but, you see, I've had a great argument with myself for the past year or two. I've been asking myself if I have the guts to do something for Scotland that might mean I gave up my life, and when a chap's made a decision like that it's a bit discouraging to be told by a man he respects that he's throwing away his life to no purpose, ay, and what's more, to a bad purpose."

"Alasdair, you must believe me when I tell you that I've had a great argument with myself too, and my mind wasn't absolutely made up till I went to Moidart and asked God to give me the answer. That may just sound a mere bit of superstitious nonsense to you, but in the major decisions I have made in my life I have always tried to put myself at the disposal of the Divine Will. Although I myself long to say to you, 'Go ahead, whatever you plan, carry it out,' I am held back by a deep intuition that it would be wrong to say that, and that if I did say it I should regret it for the rest of my life. On the other hand, if you do follow my advice I believe with certitude that events will somehow shape themselves to make the achievement of what we both desire attainable. You have argued things out with yourself. You have decided that you are willing to give your life. That's something which is settled. But there is still another argument which you must tackle for yourself. You must decide whether a living Alasdair MacPhee

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might not be of vital service to his country in the years not, I fancy, so far ahead. If another world war does come I cannot believe that from the ruins of it the young men and young women of Scotland will not rebuild their country as a sovereign state. If after such a war the youth of Scotland has no such ambition, why, that will mean Scotland is dead now and that you would be giving your life to save a corpse."

"Och, I've made up my mind already, Mr Ogilvie. We'll not do what we were going to do."

John sighed.

"That was a sigh of relief," he told Alasdair. "But within it was a sigh for the heavy question-mark I'll be carrying about with me for the next few years. And what were you going to do?"

"Och, we were going to have a shot at seizing Edinburgh Castle," Alasdair said.

"And that might have meant killing one or two people?"

"I expect it would. We counted on that."

"You have arms?"

"We have twenty rifles and five hundred rounds."

"And if you'd not had this talk with me you would certainly have gone ahead?" John asked.

"I'm sure of it," Alasdair affirmed emphatically.

"Oh, that question-mark, that question-mark," John sighed. "I'm glad that you were away in the Islands, Alasdair. If I'd driven with you on your rounds up to Assynt and not gone to Moidart first, I wonder if I should have been able to give you the advice I've given you this evening. And now, come along and let's see what Mrs MacLeod can provide for our tea."

John had been back on the island nearly a fortnight before he had Miriam Stern's answer to his letter:

21 CLAREMOUNT GARDENS

HAMPSTEAD, N.W.3

February 14, '35

My dearest John,

I waited to write until I was back from my stay at Ventnor where Astrid has now arrived. An agreeable mathe-

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matical coach has been found for Yan, who is much better, and Erika, in whom I can see a good deal of myself at her age, is attending a comparatively old-fashioned school. She is vastly improved—but perhaps all I mean by that is that this growing resemblance, apart from her auburn hair, to her grandmother suggests to ancient vanity an improvement!

My first reaction to your letter was that you were being quite absurd to take Corinna and Sebastian so seriously, and that you had made a great mistake in saying anything to her about it. Perhaps it was the reminder of myself as a child by Erika, who will not be twelve till July, that made me think of Corinna as more childish than she evidently is. Anyway, now that I am more detached I have been saying to myself that the decision to let Julius have his own house at the age of fifteen must have seemed to other people every bit as extravagant as the attitude you have taken about Corinna and Sebastian, and that the chief reason for my letting Julius do what we wanted was my own feeling for you. If I took you seriously at the age of seventeen, I said to myself, would I not be according myself an insensitiveness of old age of which even at seventy-one I cannot bring myself to believe I am the victim? And then those tender words to myself were too much for the ruthlessness of common sense, and I found myself dreaming with you of the joy it would be for both of us if this iridescent bubble, as you call it, did endure, and if a grandson of mine and a daughter of yours should love so truly that time and separation and the swift change of youth should be vanquished. I began to deck the years ahead with golden 'ifs'. If in February 1939 Sebastian aged just twenty-four should love a Corinna of just eighteen, why by February 1940 I in my seventy-seventh year might have the end of my life irradiated by a great-grandchild in whom something of you and me was mingled. Oh, of course it won't happen. Sebastian in February 1939 will be deeply enamoured of some femme fatale and Corinna will be wondering to which of some half-dozen eligible young men she can imagine herself married. And then I fetched from my escritoire that basket-shaped box of gilded filigree lined with sandalwood and read, as I have read it more than once in every one of the years since, *The Summer of 1900*. The yellow butterflies are as grey as myself now, and as transparent as I soon shall be, but

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they are still the yellow butterflies of Fontainebleau for me, and the sight of them seemed to promise that this dream of ours for Sebastian and Corinna will not dissolve into emptiness.

But you were wise to insist on ordeal by time and separation. Well, there's no more to say at present. And neither of the young people can reproach you for lack of sympathy. I think it would be wiser to say nothing to Julius and Leonora. We don't want them to be disappointed as well as ourselves if the bubble bursts.

I wonder when you are likely to be in London. Let me hear your plans some time. Dearest love to you.

Miriam

And ten days after receiving this letter John heard from Sebastian. The postmark was Rome, but the address was Poste Restante, Munich.

Dear John, •

Thank you for your letter. I won't write a whole lot in reply because I don't think any amount of talk or writing gets anybody anywhere over anything like this. I'd like to thank you for being so tolerant. It was quite O.K. telling my father about the sonata, which I've just finished off. I'll send him the MS. and wait for his criticisms. I'm going to have a look around Germany now. I'll send you a postcard from time to time to let you know my whereabouts. I'll see what I can make of the Berlioz film. I won't write to Corinna. Thanks again for a lot.

Yours,

Sebastian

"You had a letter from Sebastian, didn't you, Father?" Corinna asked.

"Yes, I wrote to him. He's going to Munich presently," John replied. "He's finished his sonata. I asked him not to write to you, and he says he won't. It was a short straightforward letter. Sebastian is being very sensible. You're going to be the same, aren't you?"

"Yes."

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John looked at his daughter. She looked back directly at him for a moment, and then her eyes seemed to be gazing ahead of him into the future.

On March 1st the Saar formally became German again after the plebiscite in January. That evening John had just heard a well-powdered voice of the B.B.C. announce that a naval and military revolt had broken out in Greece led by Republican officers, when the battery conked out. As if this was not enough, a gale sprang up on the day for bringing the mail from Flodday and a week passed before he had any news. Even that was already four days old; but it gave the vital information that the insurgents with the old battleship *Averoff* had gone to Crete, where Venizelos had accepted the leadership of the revolt on the ground that the Republic was in danger. By the time he had secured another battery the revolt had been quelled and the leaders, including Venizelos himself, were in exile. The information obtainable from British newspapers was as confused and contradictory as it always was in a country which regarded foreign news as an intrusion upon more important insular matters, and he wrote to Euphrosyne Ladas, begging her to send him if possible an account of what really had happened and why.

Meanwhile, the British Government had produced a melancholy apology in the shape of a White Paper for proposing to spend ten million pounds on making the armament of the country adequate. Howls went up from the country, loudest of all in Labour circles, because the Government had dared to suggest that Germany's recent behaviour was begetting a feeling of insecurity in Europe just when the Foreign Secretary was about to visit Berlin and clear up all misunderstandings. The Germans sensed a pusillanimity in the British attitude and Hitler caught a diplomatic cold which made it impossible for him to receive Sir John Simon. A few days later the Labour Party moved a Vote of Censure in the House of Commons on the Government's policy as likely to prove a menace to their corporant of Collective Security. Mr Baldwin in replying to Mr Attlee seemed to express a passionate desire to embrace Collective Security if he could only find her waist. He added that he could not understand why Germany thought she was

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being blamed in the White Paper for the increase in armaments. That was the last suggestion the Government had wished to make. Mr Baldwin's words acted like ammoniated quinine on Hitler's cold, and Sir John Simon was invited to come to Berlin on March 24th. In order to give him something to think about on the journey over, on March 16th Hitler informed the German people that to reward them for their sufferings since war had been forced upon them in 1914, conscription would immediately be reimposed in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles and that the peace basis of the German army was to be raised to thirty-six divisions. Like rabbits and tissue paper from a conjurer's hat the necessary armament and equipment appeared immediately.

The British Government sent an apologetic Note of protest without consulting the French Government, and added a little more to French mistrust of British honesty. In a debate in the House before Sir John Simon left for Germany he was begged by Mr Lansbury to offer Herr Hitler to sacrifice the whole of the R.A.F. on the altar of disarmament, but when Sir John Simon reached Berlin Hitler told him that the Luftwaffe was already equal in strength to the R.A.F.

ERPINGHAM HALL, NORFOLK

March 28, '35

Dear John,

What are we playing at? On March 19th during the debate on the Air Estimates Winston declared that the German Air Force was already stronger than ours and growing rapidly. Philip Sassoon replied that the German Air Force was enveloped in a good deal of obscurity but that as far as could be ascertained we were still much stronger. Ye gods, have we an Intelligence Service? Now Hitler tells Simon that the Germans are level with us, which of course can only mean they are already much stronger. What will the verdict of history be on the death of England—Britain I suppose I must say to you—suicide while of unsound mind, or felo de se?

*Yours ever,
Noll*

To this John replied:

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TIGH NAN RÒN
All Fools Day, 1935

Dear Noll,

Quem Jupiter vult perdere prius dementat. The verdict will be unsound mind.

Yours ever,
John

Two or three days later came a letter from Euphrosyne Ladas:

GRAZIA DI DIO, ISLE OF LIPSIA
March 25

My dear John,

Your letter was so very very welcome. I have not heard from you since you wrote to tell me about your great loss, and sometimes I wondered if the letter of sympathy I wrote to you was too clumsy, but I was consoled by reminding myself that you always were against the habit of keeping up a long correspondence with people you never saw. Still, cannot that be remedied? I am enchanted by what you tell me of Corinna, though she does prefer to fly in aeroplanes instead of on the viewless wings of poesy like that Boeotian Corinna who defeated Pindar at the Theban games. Who knows? She may have been as great as Sappho, and nothing of her remains. Now why do you not bring your Corinna out to stay with us at Grazia? When you were here last in that dreadful year 1922 I told you I would be longing in ten years for the company of children because I should not be married. More than ten years have now gone by, and if you don't bring Corinna quickly she will be quite grown-up. So why do you not come next month and spend what is left of the spring and all the summer with us? You need more real sun, because I am sure however beautiful your island is you cannot have such a great deal of sun. And it will give my father such immense pleasure. He is now over eighty and growing frail. He still pines for our Leonidas who gave his life for Hellas nearly twenty years ago. And now after this revolt Ion Stathatos is already in exile, and Aglaia with the children will join him in Italy, so we shall not have their company this year. The victory of Kondylis has almost sent my father mad because Kondylis . . .

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well, there are no words for Kondylis. It was a badly organized revolt and Mr Venizelos is now too old to be leading his Cretans in the mountains. It was so humiliating for him to have to fly to Rhodes. And now the Government are going to have trials, and I am afraid they will be harsh and the old vendettas will all be stirred up again.

It is believed in Greece that the proposed return of King George has been pressed very strongly by the English Foreign Office because they are looking for bases for the English fleet in case there is trouble presently with Italy, and that the Foreign Office thinks Greece will be more useful if there is a King under some obligations to England. My father is convinced that the return of the King will be fatal and if he had been a younger man he would have been off to Crete at once to join the Republicans. Mercifully he had not been very well in February and he was too weak to be careering about the Aegean at the beginning of March, and in a fortnight all was finished. It is now I think absolutely certain that the King will come back this year some time. He went away soon after you were in Lipsia last and if you accept our invitation you will have been away just as long from Greece. Please don't say now that it is too long and that you are too middle-aged to make such a journey. Think what a pleasure you will give to Corinna if you fly to Athens. And you know I am getting rather middle-aged myself. I shall be forty in December next year, and I don't believe even Sappho herself could have made forty sound palatable for a woman. So give me the pleasure of letting me meet you again while I am still only thirty-eight. It will be twenty years this next October when you first came to stay with us. Now please, John, give my father and myself this pleasure. It will be a real kindness to both of us. We are cast down by what has just happened, my father more than myself because I have a real hope that when the King does return he will try to heal this unhappy division of the country once and for all. Much depends, however, on the result of these trials by court-martial. Kondylis is really a very low kind of man, and brutal too. I am afraid he will want to get rid of so many people. Oh, Hellas, poor Hellas, what is it that makes us so quarrelsome among ourselves? I suppose it is because we have always been such individualists. And really when I see the

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result of not being individualists as in Germany and Russia and Italy I am not so very sorry after all. There were poets in Italy when she was struggling for unity, but I think very little of their contemporary literature.

I have inflicted a very long letter on you, and if I try to add any more persuasions you will assuredly refuse to come. And yet I must say once more what a joy it would be to my father and myself to hear that you are coming.

I have chosen a propitious day to write. It is our Independence Day, and in spite of the "civil war" Tenos will be as full of pilgrims as ever.

Our warm greetings to you and please give a special invitation from me to Corinna.

Your affectionate

Euphrosyne Ladas

This letter from Euphrosyne reached Tigh nan Ròn on one of those vicious April days that pierce the drought of March too viciously to be pleasant . . . the peaches would be in rosy blossom now in Lipsia . . . that avenue of gnarled holm-oaks and at the end of it those gates of wrought-iron between two marble columns . . . that large white house . . . that *loggia*, and two hundred feet below that orange-grove and the crescent of yellow sand lapped by jade-green water. . . .

"Corinna," John asked, "how would you like to go to Greece for the summer?"

"I'd love to go."

"And fly to Athens?"

"Oh, Father!"

"And then stay at that house on the island of Lipsia I've often told you about?"

"It would be glorious."

"We'd have to leave Mairi behind, I think."

Corinna tried not to appear the least elated at the implication of her being old enough to look after herself.

"She could have a long holiday and go and stay in Moidart and then with her sister in Glasgow, and then with her other sister in Perth, and with her brother in . . ."

"Oh yes, I think Mairi will be all right. I can't get away till

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the middle of next month. I must finish this play. And then you'll have to get some clothes in London. But what about our luggage if we fly? It will be a longish visit for the amount they let one carry in one of these beloved planes of yours. I think we'll have to go out by train"—Corinna's face fell—"but we'll fly back. That's a promise. You used to be rather strong on Byron when you were ten. You'd better go back to him. Anyway, you know the elements of ancient Greek. You'll be able to get hold of some modern Greek now. Yes, I think we must go. Talking of modern Greek, it would be a splendid chance for Pdraig to get off with a flying start in his consular career. I think . . . yes, that's a good idea. He could bring the main body of the luggage with him, and then we could fly out."

So John wrote to Euphrosyne:

TIGH NAN RÒN, SHIEL ISLANDS,
by FLODDAY, SCOTLAND
April 4, '35

My dear Euphrosyne,

Your enchanting invitation is irresistible from every point of view, and it comes exactly at the right moment for Corinna, whose visit to Italy was spoilt by my having to come back in January in order to deal with some political business of which I'll tell you when we meet. I do hope with all my heart that the Government will be generous over the courts-martial. It will be a great opportunity to make an end of faction and I'm sure the King will have full encouragement from high quarters in this country to counsel leniency. The state of Europe is growing worse so rapidly that disunity in any country at the moment can only play Germany's game. It's ironical to contrast the Royal situation in Greece at the moment with the Royal situation here where the Silver Jubilee is imminent.

If we reach you about mid-May, will that suit? Corinna longs to fly to Athens, and I propose to give her that ecstasy—it can be called nothing less. And now shall I strain your hospitality to breaking point if I ask it for the son of an old friend of mine who was killed in Ireland in that August when last I visited Lipsia? Pdraig Fitzgerald is at Oxford and is hoping to enter our Consular Service. He has a passion for Hellas, and it

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would be the most wonderful thing for him if he could spend his summer vacation there. He'll be able to go off and explore some of the islands on his own, but if he can make Grazia di Dio his headquarters it will be a great kindness both to me as well as to him because I have acted as a sort of guardian since his father's death (his mother was killed earlier by the British Government's auxiliary police) and he always spends most of his holidays with me. I hope that Aglaia's expectation of having to join her husband in exile won't be fulfilled and that the family will be able to spend a peaceful summer in Lipsia. In that case shall we be too large a party? You'll be frank and say if we are?

I won't anticipate the delightful talks I'm looking forward to by writing more than my greedy acceptance of your invitation and my greedy request on behalf of Padraig.

Give your father my warmest regards and tell him I cannot say how much I look forward to hearing his voice again.

You said nothing in your letter about poetry. Does the Muse withhold herself?

Corinna is longing to see Grazia di Dio, and asks me to thank you for this wonderful treat in store.

Your affectionate

J. P. O.

Thirty-eight, are you? If you keep me till October I'll celebrate my fifty-third birthday with you.

"Well," John said to his daughter when they were driving in to Athens from the airport, "it may be wonderful to jump from London to Athens like this, but so long a journey as that by air is fearfully boring."

"Father!"

"I feel exactly as if I'd been buying carpets for a new house and had seen so many unrolled that I couldn't take in the colour and pattern of any more for the present. The Parthenon will provide an antidote. We'll go up to the Acropolis this afternoon."

The great new Athens spilt like milk over the Attic plain had spread in an ever-widening pool since John last saw it, and for a while he was bewildered by and even a little resentful of the change.

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On the Acropolis, in spite of what looked the beginning of a detestable competition by new sky-scrapers, bewilderment and resentment vanished when he and Corinna sat leaning against one of the columns of the Parthenon, earth and sea and sky before them.

"I was sitting here with Prudence like this when I read the letter from your godmother to say that Pdraig's father had been killed. I want you to be nice to Pdraig when he comes to Lipsia at the end of next month. I thought you were inclined to be impatient with him at Easter."

"Only because he will order me about," Corinna explained.

"You must remember you've been like a young sister to him for so long now. Sebastian might have done the same if he'd had to put up with you as a permanent feature of his holidays for the last ten years. Anyway, I don't think Pdraig will order you about here. He'll be too much overcome by finding himself in Greece. And you'll have the advantage of six weeks' start."

"Sitting here like this," Corinna said, "I don't feel that anybody could ever irritate me again." She laid her cheek against the warm marble of the fluted column. "It seems alive," she murmured. "The way you know that a tree-trunk is alive when you lean against it."

"Each is as fresh now as if it had been wrought but yesterday, for a fadeless bloom of youth preserves them against the touch of time, and the spirit of an immutable and everlasting spring seems to have been infused into these works of men," John quoted. "That's what Plutarch wrote about those ruins when they were already more than five hundred years old; and they wouldn't have been ruins at all if the Turks had not used them as a powder magazine and if a German gunner serving with the Venetians who were attacking the Acropolis had not reduced them to the state they're in now. And if another war comes your beloved aeroplanes will be turned loose in the skies of Europe to do much more damage than Turks and Venetians. It's a grim thought."

A light north wind was blowing during the voyage from the Piraeus to Lipsia, and the sea was dark as a cut sapphire, and even darker seeming against the snowy foam-caps of the little waves. When the steamer left Zea astern to port John choked back a

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sudden impulse to tell Corinna about that star-crossed love of eighteen years ago, for it was seeming a kind of impiety to sail in silence over the water that once closed upon Zoe's youth. She would have been only thirty-six now, and if that torpedo had missed the *Whinchat* on that June day they would have been married all but eighteen years. There would be no Corinna, or at any rate not that particular Corinna.

He murmured a brief prayer for the dead, crossing himself.

"Why did you cross yourself?" his daughter asked.

"I was praying for the dead," he answered. "These Aegean wavelets dance above so many of the dead just here, dearest. Where we are sailing now was a favourite haunt of German U-boats in the war."

The steamer reached Lipsia just when the sunset was turning to rosy violet the white houses round the quay and the white houses that covered the two conical hills behind and as many as were visible of the wreath of encircling islands. The light north wind which had blown all day dropped to a dead calm, and on the quay Euphrosyne was waiting for the steamer to come alongside.

"Oh, Father, she's awfully good-looking, isn't she?" Corinna whispered. Yes, there she was, a mature Euphrosyne but straight and slim as ever, and though the black hair had been trimmed by fashion out of its former cloudiness the complexion was still ivory, and the profile was still one that Praxiteles would not have needed to idealize.

"Euphrosyne, I can't tell you how glad I am to be here again," John exclaimed, greeting her with both hands.

"Welcome," she answered in that voice which heard after the noise of Gallipoli had once seemed the most tranquil sound he had ever heard. "And this is Corinna. I pictured her more of a little girl. She is really quite grown-up."

And by those six words Euphrosyne bound Corinna to her by an infrangible chain.

"John, my father is furious that I would not let him come down and meet you. I am in complete disgrace. But he must not be allowed to rush about, and the news of the disgraceful behaviour of Kondylis and the shooting of one of his old friends who was taken prisoner by the Royalists has upset him a great deal. Are you liking Greece, Corinna?"

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"I can't say how much I'm liking it," Corinna replied.

And then in an American car they drove across the marble-paved square and stopped a moment for Corinna to look at the old Turkish consulate where her father had lived.

"And was so ill we thought he was going to die," Euphrosyne told her.

Then on over the road undulating between vineyards and olive-groves for fifteen miles to the other side of the island, and as they descended the south-westerly slope another wreath of islands appeared grape-dark in the gathering dusk above a shimmering pearl-blue sea.

"That's Seriphos," John told Corinna, pointing to one of them.

"Where Dictys pulled Danae and her baby ashore in the chest," Corinna exclaimed spellbound.

"I knew you would teach her all our stories, John," Euphrosyne said.

And now the car was entering a deeper dusk between the avenue of gnarled ilex-trees and there were the gates of wrought-iron between two Doric columns of Parian marble. In a minute or two they had reached the great white house with its wide roof of shallow cupolas where at the head of the steps leading up to the heavy carved door stood Theodore Ladas, gaunt and tall, yet somehow shrunk as he leant upon two ebony canes, his white hair thinning like the top of a breaking wave blown back by an offshore wind.

"My dear friend," he said with emotion as he flung the canes from him to fall with a clatter on the terrace and grasped John's hand. "Damnable days for Greece again. These infernal Royalists. That ruffian Kondylis . . ."

"Now, Father, do welcome Corinna."

"Come along," he told his young guest. "We've just time to see the end of the view from the *loggia* before its quite dark."

And he took Corinna through the great vaulted hall and the lighted *sala* beyond to let her lean over the parapet of the *loggia* and look down two hundred feet of cliff upon the orange-grove and the crescent of sandy shore and the smoky-blue Aegean beyond.

That summer sped by fantastically fast it seemed. The hot carmine of the Judas-trees had hardly surrendered to the crimson

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of the roses when the roses themselves had withered. Their successors the scarlet-orange flowers of the pomegranate had ruled but a brief while when they too fell, and plans for visiting Tenos for the feast of the Assumption were already being discussed. Padraig had arrived at the beginning of July, and almost at once it was the end of September and he was sighing at the thought of having to leave Greece and go back to Oxford. John visited one or two of the islands with him, including Icaros where to his pleasure he found Withers sitting at the Vice-Consular desk in that high vaulted room, that old escutcheon with the curiously elongated lion and unicorn on the wall behind him where Emil had fixed it nearly twenty years ago. His grey hair made Withers's face appear a deeper walnut-brown than ever.

"God almighty, Mr Ogilvie, if you aren't a blooming omen," he ejaculated. "As sure as you turn up in Greece there's trouble. Well, these blinking Royalists have got the bit between their teeth again, and that's that. Fancy condemning old Venizelos to death. God almighty, you wouldn't think they'd have the blasted nerve, would you? Well, they'll have His Madge back before the year's out, and then perhaps they'll settle down and stop paying off old scores. I really had to laugh last March when the old *Averoff* started careering across the Aegean like an old war-horse with half a dozen of those aeroplanes chasing her like gadflies. *And* they couldn't hit the old ship."

"It's good to find you still here, Vice-Consul, anyway," John said warmly.

"Oh, I'm here for keeps, I reckon. Yes, I'll count as an ancient monument presently, and when I die they'll put me in the Athens Museum. But look here, Mr Ogilvie, what in the name of Kaiser Bill is our blinking Government playing at with this Hitler fellow who ought to be the commissionaire outside Bedlam, or inside better perhaps? Making a naval agreement with Germany! They're bats. You should have heard my French *cher collègue* on them. Of course I had to laugh, but it really isn't a laughing matter. They're getting nervous about the Italians now. I've had two urgent enquiries for information about airfields in the Dodecanese. Yes, let 'em fortify the Dodecanese and half-exterminate the Greek population, and now wondering what's going to happen in the Aegean if they really do have to do something about Abyssinia.

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Do you know what I think 'ud make a better Government than the one we've got? A sitting of addled eggs. And what's so aggravating is that I have to pretend here in Icaros that they're marvellous. Well, you see I'm the representative of the firm, and of course naturally my goods have to be the best goods. But I think they'll b——r up the British Empire before they've done, to quote Shakespeare. Did you see the Jubilee? Well, I must say I'd like to have had a look at the old boy bowing and nodding round dear old London. How's Mr Stern? I'd like to see him again. Wonderful brain. Pity he went all red the way he did. Still, I'm glad he's doing well with his books and his family. You'll remember old Withers to him next time you meet, won't you?"

"I certainly will. You're not married yet?"

"Me? I don't think. Yes, the woman who hooks me could hook a dolphin with a bent pin. Some hooker she'd be, I give you my word. How's Mrs Ogilvie? . . . Oh, I'm sorry. I mean to say even if I don't like the idea of being tied up myself others do like it. I'm sorry about Mrs Ogilvie. You had a little girl, didn't you?"

"She's staying with me at Grazia di Dio."

"Well, bring her along with you next time you drop in at Icaros. There's only one thing against little girls so far as I'm concerned, and that is they grow up into women."

After this Padraig was brought in and introduced.

"You're going in for this job, are you? Well, it isn't so bad if you're a regular. Of course, I only got in on the side through the war. I won't ever be any more than a Vice-Consul however long I live, and I'm sixty-three now."

"Padraig's staying here for a week with the man who looks after Theodore Ladas's land here," said John. "It would be kind if you showed him around and gave him a few tips on consular life."

"Of course I will. You're not staying yourself?"

"No, I'm going on with the steamer to-night. I just wanted to catch a glimpse of the past."

"Pity we can't catch a glimpse of the future sometimes," the Vice-Consul observed. "Specially out here. There's a strong smell of gunpowder in the air, don't you think? Yes, the sooner we take the Hit out of Hitler the better, *or* put an S in front. Naval agreement! God almighty, you might as well make a naval agreement with Jack the Ripper. Well, it's been a treat to catch a

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glimpse of you, anyway. You're keeping young. But, oh lord, what an express train time is! 'All change here' before you know where you are, and its Death Junction with the up train and the down train waiting for you all according to your destination. I always remember a little French poem I read somewhere:

*On entre, on crie,
Et c'est la vie'
On bâille, on sort,
Et c'est la mort!*

That rather took my fancy. So terse, eh? Well, I don't want *you* to start yawning before you go. I don't know how we got on to this topic."

That September, British naval forces and British garrisons in the Mediterranean were reinforced.

"Is it possible these idiotic Italians are contemplating war with England?" Theodore Ladas asked. "They're mad."

"I fancy our armaments are at a pretty low ebb," said John. "And the Italian air force is certainly stronger than ours."

"I can't think what's happening to England," the old man muttered. "When I look back to my time at Oxford and think of Lord Salisbury as Foreign Secretary it's . . . it's really unimaginable that within my miserable lifetime England should be nervous about being attacked by Italians. Italians! Well, if only they'd backed Venizelos properly instead of humbugging about with King Constantine the Eastern Mediterranean could have been a British lake. But no, the English preferred their former friends the Turks to their true friends the Greeks, and the Italians cashed in on that. I hope to goodness England isn't going to give in to this Mussolini fellow. I don't really understand how a British Government can bring themselves to be polite to him. It's like asking a head waiter to sit down and have a drink with you after he's made a face at the tip you gave him."

"Well, if the King comes back with an English blessing," Euphrosyne said, "perhaps it means that England does recognize at last who are her true friends."

"John," the old man said, "I don't like saying this to you, and you know that there doesn't exist a greater admirer of England than I am. Educated there. Spent all my life in business dealings with.

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them. But God help me, the English are not loyal to old friends. They've been disloyal to the French. They've been disloyal to the Americans. They've been disloyal to us. Mind you, that doesn't mean I don't think they're the greatest nation on this earth. . . . They are. But damn it, they're not loyal. At the moment Greece can be useful if there *is* trouble with these preposterous Italians. So I suppose we can expect a certain amount of help; but England forgets. She's proud of forgetting what her enemies did against her, but at the same time she forgets what her friends did for her, and that's nothing to be proud of. I hate saying this, John, because I love England. By G——, I love that country!"

"Perhaps England is ungrateful in the way that Royalty is proverbially ungrateful because she takes everything for granted," Euphrosyne suggested.

"What do you think, Padraig? Are you going to speak up for your adopted country on your last night at *Grazia di Dio*?" John asked.

"Well, she hasn't got anything to be grateful for to Ireland," said Padraig. "And I don't think Ireland has anything to be grateful for to England. But what I like about England is that it doesn't seem to matter. I never feel my career will be injured because I'm Irish."

"And it won't be," Theodore Ladas declared emphatically. "The English are the fairest people in the world, and an Englishman's word is his bond."

"A very elastic bond when he's a politician or a civil servant," John observed.

Those last days in October when John and Corinna were staying on at *Grazia di Dio*, after Padraig, more determined than ever to serve as a consul in the Levant, had gone back to Oxford, were entranced by the calm and mellow sunlight which in the Aegean usually succeeds the first welcome drench of rain at summer's end. It was in windless October weather like this that John had first landed on Lipsia exactly twenty years ago. Such a spellbound serenity of earth and sea and sky was not reflected in the mood of man. The fever of war was mounting all the while. The Italians had marched into Abyssinia; the League of Nations was

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debating whether to denounce Italy as an aggressor and impose sanctions; British and Italian soldiers were glaring at one another across the barbed-wire that divided Libya from Egypt; most of the Home Fleet had moved into the Mediterranean; the British Lion was showing its claws, grubby and blunt enough, but still serviceable.

"I believe England is waking up at last," Theodore Ladas declared, laying down *The Times* with a toss of the head. "God, I wish I was ten years younger."

"You'd still be over seventy," John reminded him with a smile.

"I'm beginning to think the sooner the King comes back now the better," Theodore Ladas said. "Tsaldaris hasn't the authority to keep this ruffianly upstart Kondylis in his place. And if Britannia intends to rule the Mediterranean waves again Greece must play Thetis to Poseidon. Perhaps that revolt in March was a blunder. I believe the King has made a good arrangement with England."

"You Greeks are the world's optimists," John averred. "It's not surprising in this myth-making air. I'm going down to read my mail in the cove. I don't want to miss a ray of this blessed sunlight. And Corinna is enjoying one of her last bathes."

"I don't know why you want to go back at all," the old man grunted. "I can't think why you don't marry Euphrosyne and settle down here."

John gazed at his host in amazement.

"I don't expect you'd have any children. It may be late for her to start having children now. But she would make a superlative stepmother, and as she inherits Grazia it would pass in due course to Corinna."

"Have you forgotten that Corinna is a Catholic?"

"What of it? My wife's family were Latins. The house will return to its old allegiance."

"It's a delightful peep at cloud-cuckoo-land, old friend," John said. "But it's only cloud-cuckoo-land, like that arrangement of yours between the British Government and King George to rule the waves of the Eastern Mediterranean."

"You're fond of Euphrosyne, aren't you?" the old man persisted.

"I've been very fond of her for twenty years," John replied.

"Damn it, if that isn't a good foundation for a sensible marriage, I'd like to know what is," Theodore Ladas demanded.

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"There *is* Euphrosyne's point of view to be considered. It is not without importance in such a matter," John reminded the old man.

"Why don't you ask her?"

"Because . . . well, because the time to ask Euphrosyne such a question was twenty years ago."

"Yes, but you fell in love with that pretty little girl who was drowned, and then you married Corinna's mother."

"Both of which are arguments against your own suggestion," John pointed out.

"Ah, well, I daresay it's just an old man's folly," Theodore Ladas said, "but it would have been a great joy to me if you and Euphrosyne had decided to get married. I shan't last much longer, and poetry or no poetry she'll be lonely here by herself."

"You'll have Aglaia and Ion Stathatos next summer. I imagine there will be an amnesty when the King does come back."

"Yes, but they have their own place in Cephallonia, and another Leonidas to inherit it. And Aglaia's two girls, Calliope and Helena, like their own home best. I don't know why she called her boy Leonidas. She meant to give me pleasure, but it didn't. He'd have been forty-three now. What a grip he had, eh?"

The old man put back his head and fell into a reverie. John picked up his letters and went off to find Corinna, a little glad that Euphrosyne had driven down to the harbour to meet a friend who was stopping for an hour at Lipsia on her way to the Piraeus.

Half-way down the zigzag path he had turned aside to sit in one of the tiled gazebos under the shade of a pine and read his mail. It included a letter from Sebastian.

Poste Restante, Warsaw
Oct. 1, '35

Dear John,

I couldn't stand it any longer in Germany. They've just brought out some laws depriving Jews of all rights as citizens and prohibiting marriage between Jews and these square-headed mongrels they call 'Aryans'. No Jew may employ an 'Aryan' maidservant under 45 in case she's a hot Aryan "for the Protection of German Blood and the German Honour". All in capitals just like that. Some poor devils who'd broken the law

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before it became a law have been condemned to hard labour. I used to wonder whether you weren't letting your prejudice against Germany run away with you sometimes, but the whole country stinks. To be in Poland is like coming up into fresh air from a sewer. And if anybody tells you that all this vileness is just the product of a minority, don't you believe it. The whole country is paranoiac. There may have been a sane minority, but if there was it's been turned into a minus quantity in concentration camps.

If the British and the Americans go on treating these people as human beings they deserve what they get whenever they get it. Public opinion in the U.S.A. and Britain is a muddle. There was a lot of lies told by our papers about the Germans in the war, and when it began to come out that these lies had been deliberately served out as propaganda by the American and British Governments a reaction set in especially among young people. We thought it all hooey and that probably we were just as much to blame for the war as the Germans. What I've seen in these last few months have cured me of that belief once and for all. I don't know why they wanted to tell lies about the Germans. I can't believe it was possible to invent anything worse than what they're doing now every day to these wretched Jews. I'm sorry to keep on like this, but I can't get these Jews in Germany out of my head.

I'm going to Russia now. Uncle Emil got me some good letters of recommendation for visas and all that sort of thing.

I was wondering if I might come to Tigh nan Ròn next April. I've done quite a bit to our film proposition, and I hear David is to be back in England in spring. He and father never had their Beethoven film done after all. Just for the moment I can't even think about Beethoven. That's silly, but the very sound of German makes me want to vomit. I've put aside the idea I told you of about that Sixth Piano Concerto. If I came across Beethoven in one of his patriotic moods when he wouldn't write a musical direction in Italian I'd remember those Nazi swine and I'd begin to wonder even about Beethoven's music.

If you don't want me at Tigh nan Ròn next April I'll quite understand. You can rely on me not to say anything to Corinna, but I want you to know that I feel just the same about her and I expect she'll guess I do. I don't see how she could help guessing.

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So if you think I'd better not come, why, that's O.K. with me. I've written some Nocturnes. I don't see why Chopin should have the night to himself. All the same I haven't bumped into him yet! I played the piano quite a lot in Germany at first, and then suddenly I felt that for me to be playing the piano to Germans was as near a guess as I can make to the sin against the Holy Spirit.

I never wrote such a long letter in my life!

Yours ever,

Sebastian

I expect Corinna's had a pretty good time in Greece. I hope you don't bump into an Italian war plane on the way back.

John put the letter into his pocket and walked down the zigzag path. At the foot of the arbutus bushes on the shady side the white cyclamens of Cos were in flower. In grassy nooks a pale lavender crocus with stamens bright as fire spread its petals to the sun, and the tips of the sun-dried spurge were breaking into vivid green stars. He turned aside into another gazebo built upon a jutting rock and looked down over the parapet, from the crevices of which small grey aloes and house-leeks sprouted, at the tops of the orange-trees below, and the green waters of the cove, and the sea beyond across whose silvery expanse the October sun was shining with the warmth of May; and then he looked back up the way he had come to the old white house of Grazia di Dio above the sheer cliff where nothing grew except rosemary spreading its fans upon the face of the rock for protection against the south wind. This was where twenty years ago he had told Euphrosyne about that fancy of his to divide his life by the four winds and she had said that Grazia di Dio was sheltered from every wind except the south. Yes, and sheltered most securely of all from the north, he thought, the fancy beginning to work upon his reason like an anaesthetic. With an effort he dismissed the fancy from his mind and went on down the path until he reached the iron gate at the foot and passed through into the orange-grove, his footsteps moving silently over the pale grass that was beginning to shoot from the dark soil stained with the pervading green but crackling sometimes on dry fallen leaves which when crushed exhaled a delicate fragrance. And

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then, beyond this verdurous twilight, through the colonnade of slim smooth trunks he saw Corinna in her bathing-dress pale-rose as almond-blossom, sitting in the water that lapped the yellow crescent of beach and pensively regarding some pebble or shell she was holding in her hand.

"Hullo, what have you found?" he called as he emerged from the grove and walked towards her.

Corinna turned quickly, her cheeks aflame.

"It's my Venus that Sebastian gave me on my birthday."

"She'll expect to be called Aphrodite here," John said. "I had a letter from Sebastian by this post. He's left Germany and is going to Russia presently from Poland where he is now."

"To Russia?" Corinna repeated, apprehensively. "I hope he'll be all right in Russia."

"I'm sure he will. He's fortified with powerful letters of introduction from Uncle Emil." John paused, looking at the tiny sea-green bronze of the goddess.

"I haven't ever brought her down here before," Corinna said, supposing there was criticism in her father's gaze. "Only, I always think of Botticelli's picture of the Birth of Venus when I'm down here, and I wanted to see her standing at the edge of the sea by herself. I'd just picked her up when you came."

"Dearest child, there's no reason why you shouldn't bring your Aphrodite to this most appropriate setting. I stopped because I was wondering whether to tell you something or not. And I think I will. Bring your Aphrodite and let's go and sit for a little beside the orange-trees."

They walked across the sand and sat down on the soft young grass springing from the burnt herbage of the bank.

"On a midsummer night just over eighteen years ago," John related, "I sat somewhere near where you and I are sitting now with a girl of eighteen to whom I was engaged to be married. She was going to Athens next day to buy clothes for her wedding. We were to be married a few weeks later. We were at a dance at Grazia and Euphrosyne gave me the key of the gate to the *portokallon*. Well, we said good-bye, and the next day the ship that Zoe was in with her father and mother and younger sister was torpedoed by a German submarine, and they were all drowned. You remember asking me off Zea when we were coming to Lipsia

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in May why I crossed myself? We were passing over the water where it happened."

"What was she like?" Corinna asked in the voice of one bespelled by a fairy tale.

"She was small and very like a little girl really, with coppery hair and bright blue eyes and a fair complexion."

"Did you love her very much?"

"Yes, of course I did. I was going to marry her."

"But you married Mother in 1919. That was soon, wasn't it?" Corinna asked gravely.

"Two years is quite long, I think."

She was silent, and during that silence he was sitting in memory not with Zoe by the edge of this orange-grove but with Euphrosyne earlier still when he had crushed the thought of falling in love with her which was beginning to take shape. And now he crushed the thought of asking her to marry him which all the way down that zigzag path from the house had been taking shape. To Corinna the four and a half years since her mother died might seem soon to marry again. In any case, he said to himself as he flung a pebble into the sea, he was not at all certain that Euphrosyne would marry him.

"Sebastian wants to know if he can come to stay on the island next April," John told his daughter.

He noticed that Corinna was squeezing the bronze Aphrodite very tightly in her fist.

"Can he?" she asked in a small level voice from which evidently by a sharp effort of will all emotion had been driven.

"Oh yes," said John lightly, "of course he can."

"I expect you think he'll have forgotten about me by then?" she probed.

"Dearest child, I begged you last January not to take for granted that young love always lasts. I don't know what you feel about Sebastian and I don't want you to tell me; but I'm sure Sebastian will not be surprised or hurt if he finds that you have forgotten about him in that way. Anyhow, it will be jolly to see him."

"You will really be glad to see him, won't you?" she asked earnestly, her eyes fixed upon her father.

"Darling, of course I shall be glad to see him. I'm afraid I'm in disgrace with you as a lover, but it wasn't to stress inconstancy that

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I told you about Zoe. It was really told you so that you might feel sure I understood why you brought your little Aphrodite with you down here. I oughtn't to have said a moment ago that I didn't know what you felt about Sebastian, but I'm trying very hard to be what people call sensible, and I do think more about your happiness than of anything in the world."

"Darling Father, I know you do," she cried, flinging her arms round him. "And I'm sorry I said that about two years being so short a time, but I do have to say to you what I really think and I do think it *was* soon to forget. She was eighteen. I'll be eighteen in three years and three months. So I suppose I could be married then, couldn't I?"

"Well, I'm afraid I must argue that three years and three months is a very long time indeed when you're not yet fifteen," John told his daughter. "You can't expect every summer to go by as fast as this lovely summer has fled."

There was a crackle of footsteps upon the dried fallen leaves in the grove, and looking round they saw Euphrosyne coming through the colonnade of slim smooth trunks.

"Ah, here you both are," that tranquil voice was saying. "I am back from seeing my friend at the harbour. What have you there, Corinna?"

She took the bronze to look at it.

"It's mine, Euphrosyne."

"And you have been swimming with Aphrodite in your arms. Ah, well, truly she haunts this *portokallon* of ours. I have seen the edge of her flowery robe myself, but that was in spring and perhaps it was only the flowers that carpet the orange-grove then—you were too late for them this year. So you will have to come back next year."

"I don't think we can come next spring," Corinna said quickly, "can we, Father?"

"I'm afraid we can't. Are you going to swim again, Corinna?"

"No, I'm going to get dressed." And with her bronze Aphrodite she ran splashing through the water's edge toward the miniature temple on one of the rocky horns of the cove where her clothes were.

"And so you are quite determined to go away at the end of this week, John?" Euphrosyne asked.

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"Yes, we really must go back home when I've celebrated my birthday."

"We won't talk about birthdays to-day. Time stands still in these golden October days, stands still and leans for a moment upon his scythe, with such a kindly look upon his face. My father is desolated that you are going so soon. He was quite grumpy with me just now. You would think it was my fault that you were not spending the winter with us. However, you know what our winter can be like here and you are wise to go. Soon we shall be putting the mats round the *portokallon* and Boreas will shriek and blow . . . but all the same we don't feel the north wind at all badly at Grazia."

If only Corinna had not made that remark about the shortness of the time before he married after Zoe's death . . . perhaps he would have asked her in this golden October whether twenty years later she could . . .

He looked round at Euphrosyne and saw the serenity of her pale exquisite face and her marble stillness as she sat gazing undazzled across the smooth silver of the sea to some viewless horizon beyond that wreath of islands.

"You know you've always had for me a slightly alarming remoteness," he told her.

She looked round slowly, her dark eyes puzzled.

"Alarming?" she echoed. "Is it alarming to be remote? I should have thought it was most reassuring."

"You do like Corinna, don't you?" he asked.

"I think she is a completely enchanting child. How much you are to be congratulated on account of your great educational system I shall not try to guess, because if any of her charm was credited to that you would become most intolerably dogmatic."

"I'll tell you the history of that little bronze Aphrodite," John said, and when he had finished the tale of Sebastian and Corinna up to date he was aware that his heart had quickened slightly as he waited for her judgment.

"You could have done nothing else, John. There are still some of us in this world of to-day who keep the secret.

*Then, stand there and hear
The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
What life is, so clear—*

The North Wind

The secret they sang to Ulysses

When, ages ago,

He heard and he knew this life's secret

I hear and I know.

Not often but just sometimes Browning was a very great poet. Don't you think so, John?"

"I quoted those very lines to you once ages ago," he answered.

They sat in a long silence.

"You will write and tell me after April what you feel about those two?" she asked.

"Indeed, I will."

"I think perhaps you will come back to Grazia di Dio next year." She shrugged her shoulders. "Why I think that I do not know. And now already I have no idea at all whether we shall see you ever again. It was like a shooting star. Did we wish before it was extinct? But you must try to come back as soon as you can, John, because it has truly been a great joy to my father to have you here, and when he is alone with me he is thinking always of that dark lake of Doiran and of his only son. Oh, how I hope the return of the King will unite Hellas at last. It was bitter to think of Leo's youth given that Hellenes might be killing one another less than twenty years later. And we must be united because war is coming again. . . . I know it is coming. So we must think a great deal for the young now, John, because who knows how short a time youth will have?"

At that moment Corinna came out of the temple with her bathing-dress over her arm.

"I don't think I'll bathe again before we go," she announced, "so I thought I'd bring my bathing-dress up to the house and pack it."

"No, don't pack it. Leave it here as a votive offering to Aphrodite," said Euphrosyne. "I give very good advice."

That meeting John had planned between Archie Beaton, Henry Pendarves, Yves Mazy, Liam O'Falvey, and Elwyn Evans, the brilliant young Welsh don at Jesus College, Oxford, which he had called the Celtiberian Conference, did not materialize—the representatives as usual being unable to fix a date which suited all

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of them. So he devoted himself for the whole of that winter to Corinna's education, adding more Greek and Latin to coincide with the study of the Renaissance and the Reformation. Her mathematics had stopped with the necessary arithmetic to keep household books.

John did not accept the contemporary prejudice against overworking the young. He believed firmly that unless youth can learn to concentrate upon a hard eight-hour day of directed reading, writing, and instruction with at least a couple of hours of intelligent conversation maturity will lack intelligence and age want wisdom.

For exercise there were cliffs to climb, boats to row, a garden to dig, and housework to practise. He had taught her one or two civilized games like chess and picquet, but told her that if she wanted to play any kind of game with a ball she would have to wait until she was free of his tutelage. She was promised that her flying lessons should begin when she was seventeen; she had learnt with Euphrosyne to drive a car.

In January Corinna went down to London with Mairi, where she stayed in turn with Lady Ogilvie, her godmother Ellen Fitzgerald, and the Sterns at Belmore House. It was there she celebrated her fifteenth birthday, and a fortnight later with Lady Ogilvie she watched the funeral procession of King George V. John remained on the island to write a play. At the beginning of February he went to Glasgow to meet Corinna and asked Archie Beaton to come and see him at the Central Hotel.

The old rebel had aged perceptibly during the last year.

"Ay, you're noticing a considerable falling-away, Mr Ogilvie," he said. "I believe it was pretty lucky for me that the Celtiberian Conference was just a little bit more of an unreality than the League of Nations. The spirits of my forefathers would never have let me away again, and I believe by now I would be lying in that old graveyard under the shadow of the Quirang."

"Still, it was a disappointment you did not visit Tigh nan Ròn," John insisted.

"I'm too old to move nearer to the West than down the water on a fine summer's day. Ach, I know I'm not so old in years as all that, but I don't feel well these days and that's just all there is to it. Well, you stopped that nonsense last year cleverly enough, Mr Ogilvie. I was glad you did. You see, I was blaming myself

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a bit for goading them into doing something rash and useless. And by Jingo, they meant business these boys. I took the trouble to find out what they were up to from some of my Irish friends here, and they meant business right enough. They have the arms and ammunition still. But what would it have effected? Just nothing."

"It cut me to the heart to have to give the advice I did to poor young MacPhee," said John. "And for most of the rest of the year I was asking myself if I had damped down the first flicker of life the young men of Scotland were showing; but since the result of the General Election last November I have had no doubt I was right. You know, my friend, we're in for some very unpleasant form of retribution. This country, perhaps even more heartily than England, voted the second National Government into power under the impression that it was going to take a strong line with Italy over Abyssinia. The Scots were that much more muddled than the English because they were under the impression that the Pope would be scored off at the same time."

"Ay, ay," the old man chuckled, "just about what they did think. Och, they thought the Rangers were taking on the local football team. And then they found the Rangers would have to play without their boots or their breeks and that Manager Baldwin had to get them out of an unequal match. Well, well, they're queer people these North Britons and South Britons right enough. Working themselves up into a terrible state because the Italians are bombing the Abyssinians, but not a word when they themselves bomb the people of Mesopotamia. And there was that little trouble in Ireland when they let loose a pack of murderers and torturers dressed up in black and tan. 'Och, but that was over fifteen years ago. You might as well go back to the days of Hengist and Horsa.' Forget and forgive! It's a fine sentiment right enough, especially when you have so much to forget and so little to forgive."

"Ah, no, Archie, in justice to the English, they are generous to a beaten foe," John argued.

"What?" the old man exclaimed. "Only to the foes that nearly beat them first, like their American colonists and the Boers and the Germans."

"I do think you're being rather unfair, but we won't argue about

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that. I want to know something. Do you believe that this country will ever become a nation again in something more than a merely sentimental way?"

"Och, I don't believe it will. Scotland has given the best of its vitality away from itself. We Scots—or I think I'd better say North Britons after that last Election—we're like the Jews. We can weep buckets of tears for Zion, but there's no money in the place. Just think of the gallons of tears and whisky that were shed last week all over the world at Burns gatherings. The wee hoose, and the auld mither, ay, and the kirkyard and the kailyard, and we two pu'ing the gowans fine and the MacGowans pu'ing us a bit finer, and the heids of departments and John Anderson, my jo, climbing the hill thegither, and when you can climb like John Anderson from George Watson's School, Edinburgh, to Government House, Calcutta, by way of Leipzig University, man, it's not just climbing, it's mountaineering. And their hearts are in the Highlands all the time, och ay, chasing the deer; but their heads are not in the Highlands. Not at all. Their heads are in their jobs."

"Where in justice to them they ought to be," John pointed out.

"Ach, well, then let's have a little less of this cardiac depression, because it's just sentimental malingering."

"Yes, I admit it can be exasperating, but love is sometimes obstinate, and I love our country, Archie. And that love includes even all this exasperating sentimentality because I think such sentimentality is just so much mental whisky to drown a deep disquiet of the soul. In urging young MacPhee to give up his mad scheme I was beset all the while by the notion that perhaps a deliberate sacrifice of life would work a miracle."

Archie Beaton shook his head.

"Not so long as the English treat political prisoners as common felons," he said. "Ay, they're cunning right enough the English. They just assume if a man does not like to be ruled by them that he must be a criminal."

"No, I don't think violent action would achieve anything," John agreed; "but that is a lack of faith. No miracle was ever expected. Still, it's no use going over all that again. What about the future? One cannot travel about Europe now without being convinced that another war is on the way, and if such a war does come it must leave Europe a wilderness. We may see a condition of human misery

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unequalled since the break-up of the Roman Empire. Perhaps the present deliberate parochialism of the Irish Free State is a profound intuition to withdraw from the world while there is still time so that as in the Dark Ages Ireland may once again offer a fortress to the soul of man. We cannot withdraw in Scotland or Wales from the war which is coming. We must be linked with England in such a war because the war will be against Germany, no matter how hard our second National Government may try to escape from such a war, and in a Germanized Europe neither Scotland nor Wales could hope to preserve even what is left of their nationhood."

"Mightn't that apply just as much to Ireland?" Archie Beaton suggested.

"No, I think Ireland might live outside it, as it were; but the future of Scotland and Wales would be determined by the attitude of a victorious Germany toward England. And the reason that was decisive in persuading Alasdair MacPhee to abandon his project was my conviction that at this moment only Germany could gain the least advantage from it by being encouraged to suppose that there is a serious possibility of Britain's breaking up into component parts now, of which of course there is no possibility. That does not mean I have given up hope that after such a war Scotland and Wales may not be able to achieve the independence that will prevent their ever again being dragged into a war, which, if it comes, will come because the City of London will not allow the Government to take action against Germany while there is still a chance to take effective action."

"There are a good few Scotsmen—or North Britons—in the Government and in the City of London too," Archie Beaton pointed out.

"I've admitted that at present Scotland is completely involved with England, and every bit as much responsible as England for these disgraceful years of wasted opportunity since 1918. We are committed to pay for our joint folly when Nemesis exacts payment. It would be ludicrous, however, for the present to attempt to rouse a country which just two months ago helped to elect the present Parliament."

"Och, I agree with you, Mr Ogilvie. I couldn't agree more heartily. Just put your dreams away in a box. I did the same with mine long ago, and the moth got at them."

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"I wish I could lock up my nightmares as easily," John muttered. Just then Corinna came in.

"You remember my daughter, Archie?"

"Well, well, well, what a difference in just no time at all! Did you ever see those fairies?" he asked her in Gaelic, and she told him in his own tongue that she never had.

"Well, I won't say with much confidence that you'll be seeing them yet, but there's one thing—if you do, you'll be able to speak to them in their own language. Ah well, well, Mr Ogilvie, you've not wasted all your time in the islands when you've a daughter who can speak the Gaelic with such a nicely balanced mixture of Moidart and Harris in the way of her speaking it. You're bonny right enough," the old man declared, looking at Corinna, those leaden-blue eyes of his bright for a brief instant as polished sapphires. "My word, she'll be married on you before you hardly know where you are," he added, turning to John. "And it's himself will be the lucky man who wins her." He put his hand in his pocket, took out an old snuff-box, opened it and began to poke about with his finger. "Don't be afraid, I'm not going to ask you to take a pinch," he told her in Gaelic. "I'm looking . . . ah . . . here's the little fellow." He showed Corinna a small silver coin he had rescued from the snuff. "Will you accept that silver penny, young lady, from Archie Beaton? It's old right enough. Yon thin twisted battered face is the face of Mary Queen of Scots. I found it myself when I was a boy of fifteen."

"I'm fifteen," said Corinna.

"Look at that now. Well, I was just your age, and I was after spreading the peats on a fine May morning in the isle of Skye. I just sat down for a moment because it was pretty warm and I caught the glint of it in the bog. That's on the edge of sixty years ago and I've kept it ever since."

"It's frightfully kind of you," Corinna said. "But I don't think I ought to take it from you now."

"Och, yes, you will now. That silver penny was out of circulation for over three hundred years before I rescued it, and it's in no mood to go out of circulation again. So you'll please carry it with you and the old man's blessing which goes with that silver penny. Ay, you're bonny right enough," he declared again. "I'm not so much taken with the way the young women and girls are all sporting

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the kilt these days. But yon kilt of yours suits you fine, *m'eudail*."

"Thank you very very much for the silver penny, Mr Beaton. I'll keep it always," Corinna promised.

"And when it catches your eye sometimes," the donor told her, "put your mind back to Archie Beaton and say to yourself that he was just as much a queer old relic of the past as the penny he gave you. You won't find many Mary Queen of Scots pennies in another sixty years; but you'll find no Archie Beaton at all, not if you search the West of Scotland from Cape Wrath to the Mull of Kintyre. Take a good look at me, *a nighean*. You'll be able to brag to your grandchildren that you once saw with your own eyes a genuine Sgianach of once upon a time. The isle of Skye will be a national park then, and they'll have a few so-called aborigines living in a reservation dressed up in kilts and plaids and gewgaws to amuse the towrists. But you'll know better, you'll be able to recognize the difference between them and the genuine article. Well, I mustn't stay blethering any longer. Good-bye, my dear. *Bean-nachd leibh, Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe*."

"That's what old Torquil Macleod of Ardvore used to call me," said John. And then suddenly with his mind's eye he saw the tall figure of the laird standing by the coach in Lochinver and he was thanking him for that visit to Assynt thirty-four years ago.

"The pleasure has been mine, Iain Mac ghille bhuidhe. I wanted to bequeath a dream."

John looked sharply at Archie Beaton.

"You're making a very ceremonious farewell," he said.

The old rebel squeezed his hand, and slipped out of the hotel sitting-room as quietly as just five weeks later he would slip out of life.

TIGH NAN RÒN

February 15, '36

Dear Noll,

Can't you do anything in the House of Lords to stop the Air Ministry from going out of their way to choose particularly unsuitable sites on which to practise with their infernal bombs? Last summer they picked the Abbotsbury swannery as the ideal target. That was stopped by public opinion. Then they chose Druridge Bay in Northumberland, but had to abandon it because

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the fishermen objected. Now they've decided to practise with their bombs on Holy Island! Apart from being one of the most famous bird-sanctuaries in Europe, it is or it should be hallowed for Englishmen by more sacred associations than perhaps any spot except Glastonbury. Why choose Holy Island when Peace-haven is available?

Corinna asks me to warn you that the recent beating of Mrs Mollison's record flight to Cape Town by a man will not last. If Mrs Mollison doesn't soon put Flight-Lieut. Rose in his place some other woman will. We're sorry to hear of chickenpox in the family, but weather like this seems a good time to choose for being in bed. Love to you all.

John

ERPINGHAM HALL, NORFOLK
Feb. 18

Dear John,

Philip Swinton received an influential deputation yesterday led by Sir Charles Trevelyan, and the bombing of Holy Island has been abandoned. The fish in Druridge Bay are to be sacrificed instead. The S.S. for Air added, with what may have been macabre humour or merely vague ministerial politeness, that he would see what could be done on behalf of the local fishermen.

Erpingham is like the monkey-house. Sally, Simon, and Jeremy never stop scratching themselves. 'Yah!' to Corinna over Amy Mollison. Love from us all.

Noll

TIGH NAN RÒN,
Feb. 27, '36

Dear Noll,

I read in The Times that the Government as a measure of defence are starting a civilian Anti-Gas School at Eastwood Park, Gloucestershire. Instructors will be trained to train local instructors how to rescue gassed civilians at the rate of three for every 100,000 inhabitants in thickly populated areas! It would be funny if it mightn't be so serious.

Meanwhile, will you start a Political Anti-Gas School at

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Erpingham to rescue gassed voters in thickly populated constituencies?

Yours,

John

TIGH NAN RÒN

The Ides of March, 1936

Dear Noll,

Inskip! When I heard it over the wireless I thought it was a coy jest by a B.B.C. announcer, but it's true. It's in The Times. Inskip! With Winston available, and one presumed only unemployed because he was being kept for the post of Minister of Defence, Inskip! Does Baldwin think the struggle between us and Germany will be fought out in the law-courts, and that because the Attorney-General has not been a conspicuously successful prosecutor he will therefore be strong in defence?

On the Nones of March Hitler denounced the Locarno Pact, and simultaneously in accordance with the fait accompli of the new diplomacy marched detachments of the German Army into the demilitarized Rhineland. Sir Austen Chamberlain's Locarno garter burst with a loud report. And Great Britain's answer is Inskip!

Yours ever,

John

TIGH NAN RÒN

March 30, '36

Dear Noll,

It's worse than one could have believed possible. We fetch the Council of the League of Nations to London. The other Locarno signatories, Russia, the Little Entente, and the Balkans are ready to denounce Germany's outrageous action and are all waiting to see if we will take action. And we rat on the whole of Europe. We rat because the Press is full of letters from nitwits demanding Italy's blood for using poison-gas against the Abyssinians and arguing that the Rhineland belongs to Germany so why shouldn't Hitler march his army in? The whole country is preoccupied with taking action against Italy because, I

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suppose, people imagine it will be so easy to show the Italians that the noble English are always ready to protect the smaller man. They forget what these noble fellows did to Ireland. They forget what these noble fellows did not do for the wretched Jews in Germany. Yet they have taken the Abyssinians to their arms as sentimental kids take golliwogs to bed with them.

Well, I hope when war with Germany does come that public opinion will remember it was its own blindness and folly which frightened the cowardly Government it had elected out of taking advantage of the last opportunity to save Europe. The last. I hear from my friend Camille Varenne that the French Government offered to march its troops into the Rhine and put the German troops out if we would only send so much as a token force of a few men to show that we stood by their action. And this country refused. Well, history may decide we signed Europe's death-warrant this March. But of course Inskip may win the appeal to Germany's mercy. He's a distinguished lawyer.

Yours in utter disgust,

John

ERPINGHAM HALL, NORFOLK

April 5

Dear John,

I think you're working yourself up rather unnecessarily. Salisbury said some pretty sharp things in the House about Tom Inskip's appointment as Minister of Defence during the three debates we had on the Government's White Paper, and Hailsham pointed out that Inskip was a sincere fellow with a lot of common sense and a good deal of tact. He is in fact personally very popular, and after all, the new Minister's job is to coordinate Defence, i.e. in effect persuade the three Services to pull together, which as you know isn't easy. Winston who, I agree, from one point of view was the obvious man, has been so terrifically anti-German of late in his speeches that the Government were afraid he'd cause trouble, the object being to persuade Hitler of our friendly intentions. The other objection to Winston was that he might get too much of a move on with the Services, and so again upset the Germans. The only other possible choice was Sammy Hoare, and at this moment his name is mud with the general

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public after the Hoare-Laval show last December. My own opinion is that poor Sammy was thrown to the wolves by Stanley B. whose extraordinary casualness and slackness and general vagueness is beginning to create a good deal of feeling against him, and there's a move in one group which includes Austen Chamberlain, Winston, and Robert Horne, to replace him with Neville Chamberlain. I don't think they're going to find it so easy. Baldwin is a foxy fellow and he really does enjoy being Prime Minister. The way he and Ramsay MacDonald used to moan over the wireless about the weight of their responsibilities showed how much they were really enjoying them.

Anyway, there's no doubt whatever that the public are all against antagonizing Germany. The Labour people have always been pre-German. So is Lloyd George. And so are half the Tories. And this Franco-Soviet Pact has upset a lot of the Tory supporters of France. I don't agree with you that war with Germany is inevitable, and though at first I thought this chap Hitler was rather a bad joke, I'm sure the last thing he wants is war. He's frightened of the Bolshies, but that's quite natural, and I think this deal between France and Russia without consulting us was just as much of a smack at Locarno as their marching into the Rhineland. We obviously can't keep them out of the Rhineland for ever, so why not let them have it now?

Prue and I met this fellow Ribbentrop at lunch the other day. He's the worst type of Teutonic counterjumper, but I felt he was being sincere when he assured us that now this Rhineland sore has been healed his boy-friend Hitler does genuinely desire to cooperate in getting Europe to pull together. His argument is that the French are to blame entirely over this pact of theirs with the Russians. I'm bound to say he did convince me that Hitler does want our friendship above everything else.

I'm not in favour of letting-up one little bit on rearmament, and I only hope the new Minister of Defence won't allow himself to be lured away by the sailors and the soldiers from the all-important thing for this country, which is air power. The sailors and soldiers think the air has no more than nuisance-value for war. They'll find out their mistake if war does come. The theory is that the two rival air forces will drop gas cylinders and bombs for two or three weeks on each other's cities, then rush at

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one another like a couple of gamecocks, and when they're both knocked out, settle down to their proper job of doing reconnaissance for the soldiers and the sailors. But I do think it's a mistake not to let the Navy have their own air fleet independent of the R.A.F. Until they get back the R.N.A.S. they'll continue to oppose air development, and the Admiralty has much more influence over the politicians and the public than the War Office and the Air Ministry put together.

David, back from Hollywood, has been staying with us for a week and talks of coming up to see you presently. It's a fantastic world he lives in, and he regards my attempt to be an hereditary legislator as if I were a budding Harold Lloyd. By the way, Turner Rigden is now a director of Erpingham Estate (Ltd.), and I rather think prosperity is round the corner for the old boy, for he seems to be on the point of securing control of these pills he sells. He has a new slogan with which he's very pleased: 'Comfort without Compulsion'.

The family is fit and all ready for measles now. This letter is long, but I hope it'll cheer you up into taking a less gloomy view of international prospects.

Yours ever,

Noll

TIGH NAN RÒN

April 8, '36

Dear Noll,

I'm sorry to seem unappreciative of what must be by far the longest letter you ever wrote in your life, but believe me, Hollywood at its most extravagant is much nearer to reality than the British Government and the British people at the present moment.

Easter greetings to you all. Corinna and I are going down to South Uist for our duties and return here on Monday. Arthur arrived from France on Wednesday for a flying visit.

Yours ever,

John

The puffins had reached the island on the night this letter was written, to spend a busy day clearing out and tidying up their old

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burrows to which they would return after a fortnight's honeymoon in the Atlantic.

"I wish Sebastian could see the birds," Corinna sighed when she and her father were walking down to meet the *Flora*. It was the first time she had mentioned Sebastian's promised visit since last autumn at Grazia di Dio.

"There may be a letter from him when we get back from South Uist on Monday," John said. "And the birds won't really be here for some time yet."

"And I wanted him to see *Golden Corinna*," she added. "She'll be out next week."

"She's getting a bit crowded," John said. "I think we must take the bulbs up this June and divide them. She has flourished here as well as her namesake. You'll have at least three dozen flowering bulbs next April."

And when they returned to the bird-empty island on Easter Monday the first of those lovely daffodils was out.

"I should cut it and bring it into the house," John suggested.

Next day he went along to see if Arthur's room was ready for him and opened the door of the spare room next door to see if that was ready in case, as guests often did who failed to realize that the postal arrangements of remote islands are not the same as on the mainland, David should arrive before a letter or a telegram to say he was coming. On the window-sill he saw a single bloom of *Golden Corinna* in a small green earthenware vase.

"Why is my brother who may arrive honoured with *Golden Corinna* instead of your own brother who we know is coming?" John enquired of his daughter.

And when she blushed he realized that it was not for David that *Golden Corinna* had been placed in that empty room.

"If Sebastian does come to-morrow he'll have to sleep in the box-room," John told her. This was up in the roof and only used when guests overflowed.

David was in the *Flora* with Arthur when she came over from Flodday next day, but there was no Sebastian.

"I was half expecting you'd arrive with Arthur," John said to his brother.

"Half expecting me," David exclaimed. "My god, John, if a letter and two telegrams lead you to half expect a guest, what on

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earth does it take to make you expect him? Great Scott, is this Corinna? I thought it was the Crown Princess of Sheba."

"Your letter and your two telegrams are probably in the mail-bag on the *Flora*."

"David and I didn't see one another till we got out of the train at Portrose," Arthur said. "It was a grand surprise. Gosh, John, it's good to be here again," he declared, looking round him. "Do you realize I haven't been here since the summer of 1928? But where are all the birds? Have they deserted the island since you built your house?"

"They'll be here soon. You'll get all the birds you want in a moment," John assured him.

"You've grown a moustache, Arthur," Corinna said. "I rather like you with a moustache. Why don't you grow a moustache, Uncle David?"

"Now listen, Shirley Temple as she soon will be," said David solemnly. "Can the Uncle right now. Cut it right out. Put a sock in it. You're too big now to be cheeping 'uncle' after me, and I wouldn't get away with it."

"Some Yank," Arthur grinned. "What a crooner *manqué*!"

"All right, Eton, Harvard, Boston, and the Ritz," David jeered. "Know what they call people like you a few miles west of New York? Cream-puffs."

"They were calling Franklin D. Roosevelt a stuffed shirt in Hollywood," Arthur reminded David.

"That man's a menace."

"You'd better get used to him, David, because Hollywood will have him for another four years after next November."

"Oh, I'm going to be over here now for at least a year. I'm making a picture for C.C.F. right away."

"Your Beethoven film came to nothing, then?" John murmured, with a slightly ironical sympathy.

"No, that fell through. A pity, because I think it would have been pretty good," David replied.

"I've been trying my hand at a film treatment of Berlioz," John told his brother.

"You have? why, that's great," David exclaimed.

"And I'm rather hoping Sebastian may turn up with the music for it worked out."

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"John, this is really most exciting. His father told me Sebastian was in Russia when I saw him about three weeks back."

John watched his daughter's almost agonized attention to Arthur's enthusiasm about Tigh nan Ròn as she tried at the same time to listen to what he and David were saying.

"We're expecting him here this April at any time," John said.

The birds began to arrive during the night four days later, and at lunch-time when the air was vibrant with myriads of wings Corinna, looking through the glasses at the *Flora* as she came chugging over the bottle-green water below the dark columns of Garbh Eilean, grew white suddenly as the wing of a bird. Sebastian was sitting by old Aulay in the stern.

"Well, Arthur, I heeded your warning fifteen months ago," John said to him when three or four days after Sebastian's arrival he was walking down the cliff-path to see him aboard the *Flora* on his departure back to France.

"Oh, that's all finished now," Arthur replied confidently. "I think Sebastian's developing well. Less aggressive but somehow more determined. I was rather impressed by what he told me about Russia. I think the French have been wise to make this pact with the Soviets. They're fast losing any trust they ever had in Britain."

"Is it surprising?" John asked. "Well, Arthur, it's been splendid to see you back on the island. Don't be too long before you come again. I'll write to Mrs Langridge and thank her for insisting on your coming. And give my love to Gabrielle and her husband when you see them."

"I certainly will, John. Poor old Varenne is in the depths of gloom about the future. You don't think there's a chance of your being in Paris at all this summer?"

"No, I'm going to keep Corinna hard at it. I might take her to Spain for the winter," John replied.

They had reached the slip by now.

"Good-bye, John. You know how much I enjoyed this visit. But I've been cursing myself all the time for making such a fool of myself over Blanche Halloway. If I hadn't, Mother might have seen Tigh nan Ròn, yes, and be living here now."

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Arthur turned quickly and jumped into the boat.

"Where's David? We'll miss the steamer if he doesn't look out. Come on, David!" he shouted to where David, talking very fast to Sebastian, was walking very slowly down the path from the house.

"It's probably another film," John commented.

"Yes," said Arthur, "talkies is a good name for them. I should think there'd been more talk and less to show for it over films than anything yet. David!"

The director began to hurry at last.

"You'll turn that idea over in your mind," he called back to Sebastian as the *Flora's* engine began to chug. "What we want both here and in the States is a new angle on Bolshevism."

"What is David babbling about now?" John asked a little impatiently. His brother had praised the way John and Sebastian had worked out the proposed Berlioz film but declared that nobody would look at pictures about the lives of composers at present. He had not realized when John told him he had been working at a film about Berlioz that Berlioz was a composer. He'd been fancying he was a pioneer of flying.

"He wants me to put together a story about Russia," Sebastian said.

"Look here, Sebastian, don't be led away by David's bright ideas into wasting time over stories," John advised him. "It's one thing to arrange the music for a proposed film. It's quite another thing to start thinking in terms of stories and new angles. Music is your job."

"Wagner thought of his operas in terms of music and words," Sebastian observed.

"Oh, well, you know best what you want to do," John said. "But I know these film people. By the time you've wasted time and energy on the script and music of a Russian film, the film world will have discovered that the one fatal thing to put on the screen is a story about Russia. Film people are like the popular Press. They believe the secret of success is imitation."

"David wasn't suggesting I should write the script," Sebastian explained. "He just wanted an idea for a story from me. He'd find the script-writer."

"Yes, and I know just what he'd find," John scoffed. "The

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average script-writer is uneducated, untravelled, and entirely insensitive to any impact of life upon his mind. His job is to find the lowest common factor of an audience and reduce any work of art as nearly as he can to that. He is the interpreter of what the man in the street or the woman outside a shop-window thinks a Russian or a Frenchman or a spy or a doctor or a retired colonel or anybody else ought to be according to the great tradition of banality. He looks at the Muses as a bawd looks at her hirelings. They keep script-writers in coops at Hollywood, and there those capons of art grow fat."

"That's a good tirade, but I'm not paying so much attention as all that to David," Sebastian said. "All the same, when I go back to Russia next month I believe I will work out a story. Don't worry about its affecting my music. It'll be the music that makes the story, not the story the music."

That night, sitting up in John's library, Sebastian returned to the subject of Russia.

"Something mighty revolutionary really *is* going on there just now. They don't begin to have an idea over here or in the States what's happening. I'll know a bit more when I come back next year. . . ."

"You're not coming back till next year?"

"I don't believe I will, John. I tell you, Russia's alive. Lots of people will tell you that Germany is alive. Don't believe them. Germany's only alive the way a corpse is alive with maggots."

John shook his head.

"I think the corpse simile is dangerous. There's enough life left in Germany to endanger the whole future of man if the military strength of Germany is allowed to grow to the point of these Nazis being convinced that they can impose their infernal creed on the rest of humanity."

"Not on Russia," said Sebastian with assurance. "But I don't want to say too much until the result of the struggle going on now between the original revolutionaries and Stalin is finally decided. I've no doubt Stalin will win, and that's why the Germans are in such a panic. And they have reason to be if Stalin gets his way and, instead of trying to create revolutions in other countries, relies on making a success of the Soviet Union to show what communism

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can achieve. And there's no interference with religion, John. Religion can do what it likes provided it doesn't work against the Soviet Union, and as communism seems to me to offer a much more practical political basis for religion to work with than capitalism I don't see why Church and State should ever quarrel. And another thing, John, you're great on preserving the individuality of smaller nations and you're all against standardization, well, all these republics that make up the Soviet Union are encouraged to keep their individuality. Yes, they've got to accept the economic theory and practice of communism, but what independent small nation, say in South America, could hope to run an economy of its own that ran counter to the capitalist system? I think we've been handed a lot of hooey about Russia, and I'm darned glad I went there to see for myself. It's a long long way from being an earthly paradise yet, but it doesn't see why it shouldn't become an earthly paradise, and in fact it is absolutely sure it can. You can't find such faith in the future in any capitalist country."

"What's your father say to all this enthusiasm for Russia?" John asked.

"Well, he can't quite shake off his prejudice against the original Bolshevism. 'It's all very fine,' he said to me, 'for you to talk about a fundamental change, but they're still worshipping Lenin's mummy, aren't they?' I told him I didn't want to argue about the religious side of it. I said I felt the Catholic Church was living a bit too much on its fat, and that made him annoyed. All the same, John, if the Soviet Union is going to make a success of human existence within the next fifty years the Latin Church and the Orthodox Church had better become buddies again as soon as possible. You see the bad result of the schism in Poland better than anywhere. The only people who've benefited from that are the Germans. It may sound presumptuous—I guess it does—but I believe that if the Latin Church had let Germany go Protestant all over and had concentrated on reunion with the Orthodox Church at the time of the Reformation we might have had a really Christian Europe to-day."

"I wonder," John murmured to himself.

"I'm glad I can make you wonder anyway," said Sebastian. "Poland seems to me the test for the Latin Church. The Church sold Poland just as much as Britain and France sold Poland at the

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time of the Partitions. Each of them had a different excuse, but the Church's excuse was the worst of the lot. The Church sold Poland to preserve Vienna. And Vienna was already dead. Suppose Germany tries to swallow Poland again? Will the Vatican have a lot to say? They certainly will. And it will be about as effective as trying to stop Vesuvius from erupting by leaning over the crater and blowing into it."

"The Vatican always has a good long-term policy, Sebastian. You must remember that they think in centuries there, not in years. Don't forget that beyond Russia lies China. I doubt if there's room for Rome and Byzantium in Europe. But it's a little premature to discuss the religious possibilities of Moscow. 1953! We're not so far away now."

"What's going to happen in 1953?"

"I was thinking that Byzantium fell in 1453 and that the Turkish lease might suitably be terminated. It would have run five hundred years," John said reflectively. "Have you talked to Emil about the future of the Soviet Union?"

"Oh, he understands pretty well what's happening."

"He would," John murmured.

"He's not interested in the religious side, of course; but he's positive that no capitalist countries will be able to stand up against the evidence Russia will offer the rest of the world in another ten years when it's in a position to encourage unregulated inspection. His only worry is whether Germany will attack the Soviets before they are armed and ready for them."

"I'm afraid that's what many politicians in capitalist countries are counting on," John said. "War between Germany and Russia with both of them exhausted at the end of it, and a chance for *laissez-faire* to amble along for another twenty-five years by which time the political supporters of *laissez-faire* expect to be quit of all earthly responsibilities. Do you think the future of music belongs to Russia?"

"It's queer about their music. I think the advance guard in Western Europe would have a shock to find how old-fashioned most of contemporary Russian music is. There are exceptions, but there is very little of this over-anxious modernity you get in Western Europe and the States."

"Play to me those nocturnes of yours," John asked. And when

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Sebastian had played the five nocturnes he considered worthy of performance, he added, "Well, they seem to me simple, sensuous, and passionate, and I don't see what else a nocturne wants to be. I wish I'd heard your violin and piano sonata."

"I'd rather not try and give it on the piano alone, John. Now, if you'd had Corinna taught to play the fiddle..." He broke off.

"I have considered it," John said. "But I don't want to waste her time acquiring accomplishments. Do you think . . .?"

"No, I'm only joking," Sebastian cut in. "I wouldn't have her different in any way from what she can do and from what she is."

"You're still fond of her?"

"Fond of her!" Sebastian echoed in a far-away voice.

"I can't say I'm not very glad that you are," John said, after a moment's silence. "But I'm also very glad you're going back to Russia for quite a long time."

TIGH NAN RÒN

May 1st, '36

My dear Euphrosyne,

The magic holds. I had to be very strong-minded, very strong-minded indeed. Luckily boy and girl were both as good as gold and demanded nothing. Sebastian has gone away and will spend the rest of the year in Russia about which he was most interesting. I am coming round more and more all the time to his theories. Corinna is being kept as hard at work as I can keep her. She sends you dear love. I think a very great deal about Grazia. How is Metaxas behaving? I hope he won't be bitten by the dictator fly and throw out his chest and chin like Mussolini. I grow gloomier about war's blood-red blossoms which are setting fruit in every direction. How is your gallant and much-beloved father? I am tempted to suggest coming out to Lipsia, but I think I must keep Corinna to her books, and I like to hold Grazia as a refuge available for the body in a kind of luxury of procrastination. It is always a refuge for the mind. Blessings on you and the house.

Your devoted

John

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TIGH NAN RÒN

May 2, '36

Dear Julius,

We've had a delightful visit from Sebastian, and I have been deeply impressed by his single-heartedness. He's developing just as I'd hoped he would develop. I think you ought to listen to his views on Russia. I trust his judgment. And I fancy another fairly long stay out there will give him a clearer vision of the future than most young men have. I'm getting rather weary of contemporary youth's preoccupation with self-pity. Thank heaven, he has none. What a muddle this poor country is in about sanctions! Will nobody teach our Labour leaders the elements of logic? They don't seem able to grasp the hard fact that we dare not declare war even on a comparatively weak power like Italy because we haven't got the weapons. Love to Leonora.

Yours ever,

John

TIGH NAN RÒN

May 16th

Dear Uncle Noll,

I feel I must write and offer you my condolences on the smashing of the record to Cape Town and back by Amy Mollison. Yah! There is no news here except that I am working fiendishly hard, and that isn't news nowadays. I found a twite's nest on Garbh Eilean. With much love to all at Erpingham.

Your loving Corinna

GRAZIA DI DIO, LIPSIA

May 16

My dear John,

Last time I wrote to you was when our great Venizelos died. Now Tsaldaris has followed him and the unregretted Kondylis and poor Demerdjis who had his points, and John Metaxas is head of the Government! An amnesty has been voted for those who took part in the revolt last year. So Ion and Aglaia with their family will be with us this summer. My father takes a gloomy view of John Metaxas at the head

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of affairs. He is convinced that clever Yanni was bitten by the dictator fly long ago and that the poison may affect his system at any time. The King has worked hard to try to reconcile the two parties, but he seems unable to convince the Liberals of his royal neutrality. It is sad, because inevitably it will mean that power will rest in the hands of the Populists, as the Royalists call themselves. The situation is complicated by the fact that the Communists can control the vote in the Chamber. It is fantastic, for I who am not so old as all that can remember a time when the whole membership of the Communist Party in Greece did not add up to six, all of them living at the Piraeus.

Just about this time last year you and Corinna were arriving at Grazia. My father still obstinately hopes that a complete absence of sun on your island will drive you back to the Aegean before summer is over??? He is wonderfully well in spite of old age's feebleness, and he and Ion will have a great deal of pleasure in agreeing about the sinister designs of John Metaxas.

What a wretched fiasco the attempt to stop Italy has proved, and I am afraid the smaller nations of Europe feel they have been a little deceived by England. We hear that Greece will have the privilege of a visit from Dr Schacht next month, and my father shakes his head gloomily over the blindness of England in allowing Greece to be involved in the German economic sphere. I wonder how long we have to wait before catastrophe overwhelms us all. Don't postpone your visit to Grazia too long. Give Corinna my love and tell her that I am awed by her industry. I suppose I must not add 'and delighted by her constancy'. Our greetings, dear friend,

Your always affectionate

Euphrosyne

TIGH NAN RÒN

July 6, '36

Dear Noll,

Let me have some news about the debate in the Lords on Duff Cooper's speech in Paris ten days ago. I was so thankful to read of one member of this ineffable Government with the guts to say right out that the future of Europe depends on the friendship of France and Britain because the two countries have a

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common civilization and common ideals which are menaced by this detestable German propaganda. And then Attlee and Sinclair demand his blood in the House of Commons for making a public pronouncement which conflicts with the declared foreign policy of the Government and the country's treaty obligations. Eden sent a questionnaire to that little bastard in Berlin on April 7th and here we are in July without so much as an acknowledgment. It's really fantastic. Because the opposition want to kick Mussolini's bottom and can't, is that a good reason for wanting to kiss Hitler's?

And then like some figure in Alice in Wonderland Baldwin suddenly reappears in Parliament and is entertained to dinner by the City Conservative Association, to the members of which he confides that he's been taking a little holiday because he hasn't been sleeping too well. Then he goes on to deny he ever said Londonderry misled him in 1934 about the pace of German air armament. What he had meant was that the pace of it had exceeded the estimates of expert air advisers. Nobody was to be blamed. He wasn't to be blamed. Londonderry wasn't to be blamed. No Department was to be blamed, and no individual was to be blamed. Then he winds up his speech by bragging he is determined to keep the country out of war and doesn't mind being called a coward for his pains. Is this a Government or a blanc-mange?

Yours ever,

John

ERPINGHAM HALL, NORFOLK

July 9

Dear John,

The general complaint was that Duff's speech would make a bad impression on Germany. Some noble Lords objected to any member of the Government being allowed to make a speech on foreign policy except the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary. I'm fed-up like you with all this kowtowing to Berlin, but the awkward fact remains we haven't got the ships, we haven't got the men, we haven't got the planes, and we haven't got the guns, and though we've got the money we want to spend it on butter—and imported butter at that.

Yours ever,

Noll

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TIGH NAN RÒN

July 31, '36

Dear Julius,

I don't accept all those atrocities committed by the Spanish Republicans, and I don't think you can justify the Spanish Nationalists because of such atrocities. I think it's a mistake for Catholics, especially bishops and priests, to rush into print on the subject. Civil war in Spain is endemic. I'm not going to sign any protest or make any public speech. I don't want to find myself lined up on the same side as Germany.

Yours,

John

TIGH NAN RÒN

August 10, '36

Dear Julius,

And the Germans are supporting Franco. We should make it a casus belli with Germany, but we haven't got the guns even if we had the guts.

Yours,

John

GRAZIA DI DIO

August 11

My dear John,

I don't know if you have been too much preoccupied with the Spanish Civil War to pay attention to what is happening in Greece. Metaxas made a coup d'état on August 4, and we are to become a Totalitarian State! I don't know whether to laugh or cry. It is terrible that the King should agree to this. He will become another Vittorio Emanuele. I feel I know now what Athens felt when the Thirty Tyrants seized power. It is the most ignominious surrender to a fashion that was ever known. Hellas, the mother of democracy, fox-trotting with Hitler and Mussolini! It is beyond humiliation. I seem to hear on the north wind a great sigh rising from Doiran and the banks of the Strymon from those who died there to set the crown of freedom upon the brows of Hellas. Well, we shall see if the country will tolerate this monstrous behaviour of Metaxas. For myself I will

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become a communist presently if they are his most dangerous enemies. I would like to be able to talk to you about this. I said I did not know whether to laugh or cry, but I have cried quite a lot as I cried twenty-one years ago and you have seen me cry. I wonder if you remember.

Your affectionate

Euphrosyne

TIGH NAN RÒN

August 18, '36

My dear Euphrosyne,

Indeed I have paid attention to what has just happened in Greece, but I console myself by saying it is impossible for King George to allow Greece to fall too much under the influence of Germany. I do not know what has been the later development of Metaxas. Twenty years ago he was an excessively conceited and extremely able little man with an immense respect for Germany. Whether he has the same respect for Nazi Germany I do not know, but it is clear he has a contempt for democracy, and so I suppose will try to take Greece along a road on which of all the countries in Europe she is the least able to travel.

You ask me if I remember when you cried twenty-one years ago. I remember it as if it were yesterday. We were sitting on the sand between the orange-grove and the sea, and you had told me of seeing the Goeben and the Breslau steam past in August 1914. You said those two German warships cut their way through the heart of Hellas that day, and that the nation had not been united since, but you did not dream then that such disunity would last another twenty-one years. We talked about Salonica and you said you would have some respect for the military clique which was dishonouring Greece (Metaxas and Co.) if they did resist, but that as it was Hellas was the mock of Europe. 'What would Byron say of Hellas to-day?' you asked, and then you burst into tears.

And now I will tell you something I have never told you before. For many months after that in moments of black depression about the course the war was taking I used to evoke the vision of you weeping for your country beside the Aegean on that October morning in 1915, and I used to behold with absolute reality the serried

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trunks of the orange-trees and the green fruit in their dark glossy foliage, and I used to say that it was bitter like your tears. And this evocation of mine had the finality of a great picture like the *Primavera*, because it expressed a permanent and essential truth so that whatever doubts I used to have whether what I was doing in the war was worth while I could turn to that evocation of you for reassurance and feel convinced again that what I was doing was worth doing because it accorded with that vision of you.

I am not less distressed than you at this moment, about my own country. As I told you, I have for the present felt it was my duty to give up any notion of trying to precipitate events in Scotland and have for the time being in my mind merged Scotland again in Britain because I feel that a tremendous struggle for the soul of man is drawing near. You feel the humiliation of Greece. It is every bit as much of a humiliation to see Britannia doddering like an old beldame, her trident as much use as a toasting-fork, her helmet a poke-bonnet and her shield an umbrella.

I warn you that if matters get worse I may come out to Lipsia in order to find a sympathetic listener to my railing. Corinna who sends you much love is now hard at work studying the *Elizabethan Age*, and though I loathe Queen Elizabeth more than any woman in history I recognize that at least she would have stood up to Hitler.

Yours ever,

John

TIGH NAN RÒN

October 10

Dear Neil,

I hope you read the account of the Labour Party's Annual Conference at Edinburgh. Incredible people! They will not agree to rearmament, except with a lot of windy qualifications by the members of the Executive, and almost in the same windy breath they pass a resolution about Spain which must mean war with Germany and Italy if the Government adopted it. The Government is a *tutti frutti* ice, and the opposition is a pink jelly, and the country likes sweets. So that's that. When do you think the Germans will be ready for war?

Yours,

John

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TIGH NAN RÒN

November 8, '36

Dear Noll,

So all we've achieved by Sanctions against Italy that did not interfere with our profits from oil (the only effective sanction available together with the closing of the Suez Canal), by the farce of non-intervention in Spain, by a meek acceptance of Hitler's insolent ignoring of Eden's questionnaire last April, and by double-crossing all the smaller nations of Europe is the Berlin-Rome Axis proclaimed by Mussolini on All Saints' Day at Milan.

And the official excuse we offer to history is that the Leader of the Conservative Party was afraid to advocate rearmament three years ago in case he lost the next General Election, because the result of the bye-election at East Fulham in the autumn of 1933 had indicated that a strong feeling of pacifism was running through the country. So now we can say that what Winston in his admirable speech during the debate on the Address called "an act of abdication of duty by Parliament without parallel" is shared by an unscrupulous Government and an equally unscrupulous Opposition. Did ever any statesman make such a confession as Baldwin made?

By waiting two years he was able to get a mandate from the country to rearm two years after Germany had started to rearm, a mandate, he boasted, which twelve months earlier nobody would have believed possible. And then he winds up: "it is in the nature of democracies to be a couple of years behind dictatorships in preparing for war, but when they do commence they can act with at least equal vigour". I don't know whether the boobies on the Opposition benches cheered this dismal nonsense as loudly as the boobies on the Government side of the House, but I suppose so. Meanwhile in our zeal for rearmament we scrap five serviceable cruisers. We are months behind on our air programme, and can only raise 21,000 recruits for the Army, about half as many as the War Office thinks it requires to frighten Germany by next March. We are rearming with such desperate urgency and thoroughness that we can afford to obliterate an industrial town like Farrow in the interest of the Iron and Steel Federation. To the Farrow petition presented to Parliament Runciman, always a good apologist for the ruthlessness of Big

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Business, can only reply that the town like other Special Areas must wait for better times. This is like telling a woman who has been raped not to make a fuss about it because if she lives long enough she'll get the Old Age Pension.

Yours ever,

John

These foul euphemisms! Call a waste of unemployment and misery a Special Area and it may become a Paradise.

WHITE'S

November 19.

Dear John,

I'm staying in town for this long three-day debate in the Lords on rearmament. Yes, the Government's attitude over the Special Areas has been too much for a lot of us. Wolmer with about forty of the younger Tories is threatening to revolt unless something is done about Malcolm Stewart's report on the Special Areas which is damning, so damning that the Government have done nothing about it since it was received last July, and only printed it now. Stewart's resignation as Commissioner for the Special Areas is ostensibly on the grounds of health, but it's generally known that the real reasons are the impossibility of overcoming Treasury opposition prompted by the Banks to any generous scheme for employment and the complete surrender of the Government to the big industrialists, who will have nothing to do with the Special Areas, all of them being preoccupied with the problem of getting the maximum for themselves out of the money voted for rearmament.

And now the King has taken a hand. He has insisted on going down to the Special Areas in South Wales. He was furious that the Speech for the Throne had no more than a perfunctory reference to unemployment, and now he has set out to see for himself, accompanied, I imagine, much against their will by Ernest Brown and Kingsley Wood whose own plumpness will set off that half-starved wilderness of unemployment to advantage. What has annoyed the Government even more is that the King insisted on Malcolm Stewart's going with him, and finally he has committed the crime in Government eyes of making a positive state-

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ment that something will be done for the unemployed.

It was a reckless thing to say at this moment, because Big Business and High Finance think he's a Bolshie and have been spreading the rumour that he's a Fascist in order to set these credulous Labour people against him. Behind the scenes Stanley Baldwin is supposed to be handling the ticklish situation with terrific tact. Nobody knows what's going to happen; but there's a general feeling in high quarters that things must blow up very soon.

*Yours ever,
Noll*

TIGH NAN RÒN
November 21

My dear Noll,

What on earth are you talking about in the last part of your letter? What ticklish situation?

John

ERPINGHAM HALL, NORFOLK
November 24, 1936

My dear John,

If you didn't live on a desert island you'd know that the King wants to marry an American divorcée, and that Stanley Baldwin has put on one side such trivialities as the rapid approach of what will be the most appalling war ever known in order to save England by his exertions and Royalty by his example.

*Yours ever,
Noll*

On the dark evening of December 8th Andrew Lawrie had left the headquarters of Imperial Chemicals in Blythwood Square, Glasgow, and was walking down West George Street to catch the tram that passed near the digs he still occupied in Langside when he almost bumped into Alasdair MacPhee.

"Gosh, it's Alec," he exclaimed. "Man, I haven't seen so much as the back of you for pretty near two years. What have you been doing with yourself?"

"I've been very little in Glasgow during the last two years,"

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Alasdair replied. "Och, I'm engaged to be married, and my rounds have been very much extended. I'm on the road pretty well all the time now."

"Engaged, are you?" Andrew exclaimed. "Ah, well, isn't that good? So am I, man! Och, really, Alec, I've found the sweetest lassie . . . here, what are you doing now?"

"I was going to a picture. I'm taking the night train back to Inverness."

"Come on, Alec, I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll go and have a slap-up tea at the Grosvenor and celebrate the fact of the two of us getting married . . . and I'm paying, mind . . . och ay, Alec, it's no use protesting. This is my tea."

"I'll come along with you, Andrew."

"That's great. When are you getting married?"

"In April."

"You are? Oh losh, well, if that doesn't beat the band for a coincidence. I'm getting married in April myself. We'll have to make an evening of this, Alec. Ay, Maggie Maclaren. That's her name. Her father came from Lochearnside to Glasgow. He has a bar. In fact he has two bars. And both of them doing very well. And just the two daughters, that's all. Jessie and Maggie. What's the name of your girl, Alec?"

"Janet Ross. Her father has a big farm near Tain."

"What like is she? Fair or dark?"

"She's fair. She's *ruadh* if it comes to that. Red-haired. Only it's a bonnier red than yours, Andrew."

"Maggie's dark. With a lovely high colour and deep blue eyes, and just the right kind of cool wee hand for pastry. Beautiful cakes and pastry she makes. She's away now staying with an aunt at Crianlarich or I'd take you along to her place."

Presently they reached the restaurant and sat down to enjoy with proper respect that meal which is one of the foundation stones of Scottish character: the other used to be the Bible.

"Losh, Alec," said Andrew Lawrie when after fish and eggs and bacon and four scones he finished his fourth cup of heavily sweetened tea and pushed aside the empty cup, "losh, Alec, what's your idea about this possibility of the King abdicating?"

"Why, he'll be quit of a lot of humbug, I would say," Alasdair MacPhee replied.

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"That's not the point, Alec. That's not the point I'm trying to make. What right have the English to take charge of the whole business like that? That's the point. From what I can make out they're trying to force his hand. And I'm not the only one who thinks that. Winston Churchill thinks the same. Have you read in the *Echo* how they shouted him down to-day in the House when he tried to pin Baldwin to give a straight answer to a straight question. 'Sit down!' they all shouted."

"I suppose the Scottish Members shouted as loud as any of them," said Alasdair. "They always feel big men in a safe majority."

"I wish Archie Beaton were still here," Andrew sighed.

"What would he have bothered about the King for?" Alasdair asked. "He was a republican."

"And amn't I a republican?" Andrew demanded indignantly. "What's that got to do with it? Scotland isn't a republic yet, and until it is there's no reason why Scotland's voice wouldn't be heard."

"How do you think you'll make it heard?"

"That's what I'm asking myself right now, Alec MacPhee. Now look, I'll just pay the bill . . . no, you won't, Alec, this tea is on me . . . we can't talk the business out here . . . there's a fellow at the table just next us flapping his ears at what we're saying right now. Ay, he kens fine I'm talking about him. He's gone all hot under the collar. So what I suggest is we go round to Hugh Goudie's place . . . he's in his old rooms by Anderston Cross . . . and ask him what he thinks about this latest English breach of the Treaty of Union."

"But Hugh's joined the Communist Party, hasn't he?" Alec asked.

"Och, that's because of his poetry, man. He's taking his line from Hugh MacDiarmid. If the best poet in the country turns communist, Hugh would be daft not to follow his example. It's a queer thing, Alec, but you still don't grasp my point."

As the two of them were passing the entrance of the Central Station Hotel on their way to Anderston Cross Andrew nudged Alasdair.

"Did you see who went into the hotel then, Alec? It was John Ogilvie. Will we go in, do you think, and send our names up in case he'll see us?"

Alasdair hesitated.

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"What if he asks about that hundred pounds he contributed to the Airts?" Alasdair enquired with an ironical smile.

"Och, he won't remember that, Alec. That was four years ago. Time goes by. I'd like awfully much to hear what he thinks about this business with the King."

"Ach, god almighty, Andrew, I never heard a republican talk the way you do about kings," Alasdair exclaimed.

"You're not taking my point, Alec. A man's a man for a' that. It doesn't matter whether he's a king or a clerk. He has a right to a fair deal, and it's my impression he's no' getting a fair deal."

A minute or two later John, who had just taken an armchair in the sombre comfort of the Central Hotel smoking-room, heard the shrill raucous voice of a diminutive pageboy:

"Mee-sterr-o'ilvie! Mee-sterr-o'ilvie!"

He rose to intercept the questing voice which presented him with a salver from a piece of paper on which he learned the names of his visitors. The atomy, his quest achieved, turned and bounced down the wide staircase to the entrance-hall tapping his carefree salver like a tambourine.

"This is a most pleasant surprise," John said. "How did you know I was here? I'm going down to London to-night."

"Alec and I saw you going in through the swing-door, and we thought we'd like to see you. We're not interrupting you, Mr Ogilvie?" Andrew asked anxiously.

"Not at all. I'm delighted to see you both," John assured them. "I was just going to order a dram. What's yours, Alasdair?"

"I'll take a small whisky, please."

"Andrew?"

"Och, I'll just have a ginger-ale, if you don't mind, Mr Ogilvie," said Andrew, with a quick glance at Alasdair in which conscious rectitude was saved from smugness by a defiant glint in those pale-blue eyes.

"Well, how's the reformed Scottish National Party getting on in the elimination of the extremists?" John asked.

"Have you resigned then, Mr Ogilvie?" Andrew exclaimed.

"I've not resigned *from* it, but I've resigned myself *to* it, which is much the same thing," John replied. "I don't believe anything will be gained in the long run by compromise, and compromise is now the order of the day, compromise and an inclination to revive

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that sectarianism which has been the curse of Scotland."

"What was I telling you at tea, Alec?" Andrew reminded him triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you that the thing we have to aim at now is to force an issue at the Annual Conference and then replace the present Executive by men who have a clear-cut policy?"

"You're absolutely right, Andrew," John assured him. "What you have to plan for now is the time after another war."

"The war hasn't come yet, Mr Ogilvie," Alasdair observed.

"The war may not come for another ten years," John replied. "But it will come, and we have lost our opportunity to stop it by allowing the Germans to gain two clear years in rearmament. No British Government will persuade this country to accept the measures and spend the money necessary to catch up those lost two years. However, when the war comes it must speed up change more rapidly even than the last war did. I won't speculate beyond that. The object of all Scottish Nationalists should be to prepare themselves to take the fullest advantage of the conditions likely to be brought about by war. It's absolutely clear to me that at this moment the independence of Scotland would be useless because we should have no time to know what to do with it before the war was upon us."

"If we were independent we might keep out of a war," Alasdair suggested.

"With those harbours of ours? I doubt it, Alasdair. The English would never honour our neutrality, and indeed we couldn't expect them to honour it if they were fighting against Germany for the life of England. Anyway, it's moonshine to hope to win independence before another great war. What I object to about the present avowed policy of the Scottish National Party is the way it is tied in advance to the British Commonwealth of Nations. We don't know what the British Commonwealth or the British Empire will look like after another world war. We can't guess. It may federate with the United States; it may throw open the Commonwealth to other European nations: one thing it cannot do, and that is remain as it is. Scotland must share the blame with England for helping to elect that National Government in 1931 and for re-electing it last year. What will be demanded of both countries in retribution will have to be paid by both. It is too late for Scotland to escape now."

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"Mee-sterr-johnston! Mee-sterr-johnston!" a pageboy passed along, crying.

"Mr Johnston and Mr Thomson will have to pay," John said, "just like Mr Johnson and Mr Thompson in England or Mr Jones and Mr Thomas in Wales."

"Mee-sterr-mackintosh! Mee-sterr-mackintosh!" another atomy wailed.

"*And* Mr Mackintosh," said John. "They all voted for safety first. They've all been puffing away at Mr Baldwin's pipe of peace without realizing that in the bottom of the bowl it was not tobacco but gunpowder."

"Don't you think perhaps after all it was a pity we did not do what we were going to do last year, Mr Ogilvie?" Alasdair asked.

"I think the only result would have been to confirm people's devotion to safety first. Your plan was either too late or too soon, Alasdair. If you'd been ready with it at the beginning of 1931 I might have urged you to go ahead. After the Banks sold Great Britain to pay their regular annual dividend of fifteen per cent and received the thanks of the electorate for doing so, what eloquence would blood have had?"

"I think you're dead right, Mr Ogilvie," Andrew declared. "You mind, Alec, when there was a question about the possibility of placing a time-bomb in the board-room of Imperial Chemicals I put that point pretty strongly."

"Take my advice," John went on, "and concentrate on a building policy for the National Party which will appeal to a country looking round at the ruins of civilization. Get rid of the present Executive of the Party before you talk about getting clear of the Westminster Parliament. The Party will be stronger in the long run if it loses all but a handful of its members by a refusal to compromise than if it gains ten thousand by trying to please everybody. Notify the railway companies, the mine-owners, the great electrical concerns, and the rest of Big Business that the Scottish National Party will do its utmost to compel them to serve their country before themselves, and warn every new combination of financiers and industrialists contemplating further exploitation of our resources that licences they may be granted henceforth by the Westminster Parliament will be regarded as null and void until ratified by a Scottish Legislature. Don't let the North Britons make scare-

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crows of you to frighten the electorate: make it clear to those business men who signed that protest against their idea of Home Rule that they haven't begun to understand quite how unpleasant your idea of Home Rule will be for them. The National Party is wasting its time in trying to persuade North Britons that the medicine will be nice to taste and gentle in its effect: it is wiser to be honest and admit that the medicine will taste like hell and be much more drastic in its action and effect than any of which even Imperial Chemicals knows the secret. Live now ardently in the future. There is no possibility of restoring Scotland to full nationhood unless the National Party can offer youth a future. The present Executive of the Party offers nothing except sentimental regrets to the middle-aged."

Andrew shook his head.

"Losh, Alasdair and me'll be middle-aged ourselves before we know we are. We're both getting married in April, Mr Ogilvie," he announced.

"That news demands another dram," said John, beckoning to the waiter. "Alasdair?"

"The same again, please."

"Andrew?"

"I'll have a Guinness if I may."

"You're not a whisky drinker, eh?" John asked.

"Och, I like whisky all right, but I'm not feeling like whisky this evening."

"Here's happiness to both of you," John wished when the drinks were brought. "I may not be in Scotland next April, but I hope you'll both send me invitations to your weddings just in case I am here."

"Alec and I were talking over this business about the King at tea," said Andrew. "What do you think about that, Mr Ogilvie?"

"I think it looks like a damnable business," John replied. "But I don't know more about it yet than the obviously tendentious announcements of the B.B.C. and the extremely prejudiced attitude of *The Times*. That's why I'm going down to London. I want to know more. Evidently Winston Churchill supposes that he has been unfairly treated by his Government."

"He was shouted down by the House to-day. Did you see that?" Andrew asked.

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"I did indeed. I imagine the House was getting back at him for what he told it just a month ago about the abdication of its duty over the rearmament of the country. And I imagine the King has precipitated matters by his outspoken comments on the Special Areas in South Wales. But I mustn't start theorizing because I know no more than you do what is going on behind the scenes. And now I'm afraid I must leave you both and see about my sleeping-berth. I'm glad we were able to have this short talk. Alasdair, I want to say a word to you. Will you excuse me a minute, Andrew?"

John took Alasdair MacPhee aside.

"Do you feel any resentment against me, Alasdair?" he asked.

"Why should I be feeling like that, Mr Ogilvie?"

"We often regret our economies a good deal more sharply than we regret our extravagances, and I thought you might still be speculating about what might have happened last year if you had carried out what you intended to do. I was hoping when I heard you were engaged to be married that you had neither regrets about yourself nor resentment against me."

"I have neither, Mr Ogilvie. A week before he died this spring Archie Beaton asked me pretty much the same question as you've just asked me and I gave him the same answer. Anyway, I have little enough time to give to politics nowadays. Now I'm engaged I've got to be thinking more about my own future than the future of Scotland. All the four Airts are getting domesticated. Jamie Maxwell's married already. Andrew and I'll be married next year. And Hugh Goudie has joined the Communist Party."

"That's more of a tie than marriage," John laughed. "Well, I suppose no wind from any of the airts will blow away the dust that's settled upon the Scottish National Party in less than ten years."

"Och, I don't think that, Mr Ogilvie, at all. There are some pretty lively new branches already. I believe a lot of the dust will be swept away in another year or two without a doubt."

While the other two were talking Andrew Lawrie had been writing at one of the desks, and when John came across to say good-bye he offered him a piece of note-paper.

"Would you mind reading that and expressing an opinion, Mr Ogilvie?"

John read:

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To King Edward II and VIII, Buckingham Palace

Members of Scottish National Party desire to express their loyalty to you in present crisis and affirm their strong disapproval of behaviour of Westminster Government.

"Mee-sterr-stewart! Mee-sterr-stewart!" the voice of a page-boy was heard enquiring.

"May I suggest an alternative?" John asked.

He wrote quickly:

To His Majesty King Edward VIII and II, Buckingham Palace, London, S.W.

Members of Scottish National Party desire to express their loyalty to your Majesty.

"Your Majesty?" Andrew asked, with a frown. "Doesn't that sound a bit like cringing to royalty. I'm a republican, Mr Ogilvie."

"Mee-sterr-stewart! Mee-sterr-stewart!"

"But if you're expressing loyalty it must be expressed to his Majesty," John pointed out.

"I was thinking of him more as a man than a king," Andrew explained. "I mean to say he's a human sort of chap who even a convinced republican like myself can respect. He really can."

"You'd better send it the way Mr Ogilvie's written it," Alasdair advised.

"Right," said Andrew. "Wait 'a minute, though, you've changed round the Second and the Eighth."

"That's the accepted way," John assured him. "He was James I and VI. I suppose you realize that you are committing the whole National Party to an expression of loyalty by that telegram?"

"Och, I know that fine, Mr Ogilvie," Andrew chuckled. "And I'm going to hand in a copy of it presently to a chap I know in the *Advertiser* office so as it's printed to-morrow morning."

"Mee-sterr-stewart! Mee-sterr-stewart!" the shrill voice of the atomy wailed as he wandered past again.

Half an hour later Andrew Lawrie walked into the editorial offices of the *Glasgow Daily Advertiser* and asked for Mr Balfour.

"I thought you might be glad of a bit of copy for your rotten rag, Davie," he said to the reporter as he handed him the telegram.

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"That's just been sent off to Buckingham Palace."

"Is that official?" Davie Balfour asked, raising his eyebrows.

"I don't know what you call official, Davie Balfour," said Andrew Lawrie truculently, "but yon telegram's just been sent off by a few Republican Nationalists with more sense of decency in their little fingers than you damned boot-licking toadies of Royalists have got in the whole of your fat carcasses. Print it or not. It's a matter of complete indifference to me and my friends," said Andrew loftily as he marched out of the office, with a pipe in his mouth that could have been used as a life-preserver if required in an emergency.

Davie Balfour reflected for a moment. Then he rang up the headquarters of the National Party.

"Hullo, this is the *Advertiser* speaking . . . we have a telegram here which we understand you've just sent off to Buckingham Palace . . . imphm . . . I'll read it through to you . . . You know nothing about it? . . . Oh, it's you is it, Mr Maconachie? . . . and the Secretary's out just now . . . sure . . . if you'll ring through within the hour, we'll print any official disclaimer you let us have alongside with this telegram . . . och, I can't answer for what the editor will do, Mr Maconachie . . . imphm . . . but I think I can promise he'll print your disclaimer if we get it in time . . . all right."

David Balfour grinned and walked along to see his editor.

By the evening of that December day on which the Prime Minister had maundered through his melancholy version of what had led to the abdication of the King, had put on his halo, and had sat down amid the loud cheers of a House of Commons in the mood of a girls' school applauding its headmistress, John was in a state of nervous exasperation.

It had started when he bought a copy of *The Times* at Euston on the morning of his arrival and under the headline MR CHURCHILL'S BAD DAY read of "the most striking rebuff of modern Parliamentary history" administered by an hysterical House to the statesman whose plea for months had been the urgency of rearmament and whose plea now was for a brief delay.

"You common cry of curs," John had muttered to himself as the taxi drove northward to Hampstead.

Then Elise had been tiresomely voluble with all sorts of fantastic

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stories. Julius was away at Birfield, and Leonora had disappointed him by a strong bias against her compatriot. He had avoided Miriam because he had dreaded another disappointment. His club had buzzed with stories as fantastic as those which Elise had produced, and leaving it he had walked down Pall Mall where he had run into Turner Rigden looking as spruce as ever with a snow-white moustache.

"John, why, this is great! Come into the club and have a drink."

Turner himself had been sympathetic about the King, but all around the conversation of anxious stockbrokers and business men had been nauseating.

"I can't stand any more of this, Turner," he had said. "I'm glad for your sake you're prosperous again, but by G——, prosperity gives you lousy bedfellows."

"You'll run down and put in a night or two with us in our new house, John? We're on the borders of Essex and Suffolk."

"No, Turner, I must get out of this country as quickly as possible for at least six months. I'm going down to Erpingham for a night, and that's all."

"Well, I owe Noll a lot," Turner had said. "It was him getting me on the board of Erpingham Estates Limited that first enabled me to get going again. Say, have you heard my new slogan for the pills?"

"Yes, Comfort without Compulsion. You'd better give it to the Government. It exactly describes their method of rearming the country to stand up to Germany."

"Now, now, old man, you're turning into an alarmist. There's not going to be a war."

At this moment a loud-voiced man carrying a large whisky-and-soda had come up to where they were sitting.

"Hullo, Rigden! Look here, when's His Nibs going to make up his mind what he's going to do? This is going to ruin Christmas for all of us. It's bloody awful. Business is at a complete standstill."

And John had left Turner with the disgruntled money-spinner.

On the following evening when all was over he bethought himself of the Hanshaws, and decided to pay them a visit in the hope of soothing the exasperation of his mind. When he was in the taxi

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on the way to Camberwell John had a sudden dread that when he reached the gate of 12 Willow Crescent he would find the tombstone-maker and his wife gone. He had visited them at intervals since he first made their acquaintance on Armistice night in 1918, but it had been at least three years since he had last called on them. However, when the taxi stopped he read with relief by the light of the street-lamp that Frederick Hanshaw and Son were still executing every kind of memorial in stone with a prompt and personal attention to their customers, and he walked through the garden full of headstones, crosses, and urns to the front door, which was opened by the tombstone-maker in person.

"Mr Ogilvie! Well, what a surprise! And yet not such a surprise if it comes to that, because Ma had a whopping stranger in her cup of tea this morning, and she said to me, 'Fred, I believe we'll have a visit from Mr Ogilvie. He'll be in a taking over the King, you mark my words, and he'll come and have a talk over things with you.' Ma!" The burly man whose square rosy face was finely dusted with minute particles of stone led the way to the sitting-room. "Ma, bothered if you weren't right! Here's your stranger!"

Mrs Hanshaw was as grey as an African parrot nowadays, and Hanshaw himself with his full head of snow-white hair and stone-powdered countenance looked like an eighteenth-century portrait. The room was unchanged. The black marble clock was ticking on the mantelpiece between the two vases of honesty in seed. The large framed photograph above still displayed its extensive view of Kensal Green Cemetery. The old tabby no longer slept on the hearthrug in front of the cosy fire, but in his place snoozed a large ginger cat.

"Well, it's true I did pass the remark to Fred I believed you'd pay us a visit, Mr Ogilvie," said Mrs Hanshaw. "But still, when anyone says a thing like that it's really more of a surprise when they do come than what it would have been if they'd have come without you having said anything."

"Here, old lady, you're getting a bit muddled," the tombstone-maker chuckled. "What about drawing Mr Ogilvie and me a jug of this glorious teetotal beer they give us nowadays?"

The old lady went off and her husband drew the comfortable shabby armchairs to the fire.

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John enquired after the rest of the family.

"Oh, all going on well. Maudie's eldest boy's sixteen now. Charlie's eldest is ten, and Ethel had her third little girl two years back. Ma and me have got a round dozen of grandchildren between the three of them. Well, this is the last Christmas they'll all come and gather at Willow Crescent," the tombstone-maker announced with a sigh.

"You're not leaving it?" John exclaimed.

"Yes, leaving at the end of next March. Well, the lease falls in eleven years from now. My grandfather took the house for ninety-nine years in 1848. And we got a very good offer from the building company if we'd clear out by March. They want to pull down the whole of Willow Crescent and put up flats. And then Charlie had a good offer to go as manager to a big marble and stone business and they bought the goodwill of our own little business. So Ma and I are going to live at Southgate near Maudie and Bert Finningley, and that's the end of Willow Crescent, Camberwell. Yes, we're going into a little semi-detached villa. It'll be rather like living in one half of a kid's doll's-house, but there's a decent bit of garden to it and we shan't do too badly. All the same, it'll be a wrench when March comes. Anybody gets used to a house he's lived in man, boy, and baby for sixty-eight years. Ah, here's this dangerously intoxicating liquid."

Mrs Hanshaw sat down in her chair and after the beer had been sampled John said to his hosts, "So you thought I'd be upset about the King?"

"Well, it's been an upset for everybody, hasn't it?" Mrs Hanshaw said. "I mean to say, he was so very much loved, wasn't he? We felt it particularly in Camberwell and Kennington because he was in Kennington so often looking after his property there. Well, I suppose them at the top know what's best for the country, but I can't say I like this Mr Baldwin. I've listened to him on the wireless, and he always sounds to me a bit sanctimonious. You know, sort of putting on a kind of trying to come down to your level the way a clergyman will sometimes when he comes to visit you. I expect he's a very nice gentleman really, and I daresay he is quite sincere. Yet I don't know. Whenever I've heard him over the wireless I've always had a sort of a doubt in my mind. Still, it doesn't do for anybody like me to be airing their opinions like this."

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Frederick Hanshaw took his pipe out of his mouth and looked at John.

"She's properly upset, Ma is."

"Well, I am, Fred. He meant a great deal to simple people. And I haven't heard one say a word against him. There's a feeling as how he spoke out a bit too straight to please some of them at the top. Oh yes, too radical altogether he was for some of them."

"The way I look at it is he was too up to date," said Frederick Hanshaw judiciously. "And of course that's all right in London. But London isn't England. They're more old-fashioned in the provinces than what they are in London. But what I can't forgive is the way they set about it. I mean to say anybody can't help thinking they were all much more concerned about themselves than what they were about King or country, as the saying goes. The last time you came to see us, Mr Ogilvie, you were a bit worried about this Hitler. . . ."

"Oh, there's a fellow I dislike," Mrs Hanshaw broke in. "And yet there's a whole lot of people I talk to who think he's wonderful."

"All right, Ma, give me a chance to say what I was going to say," her husband protested. "Well, in my opinion, Mr Ogilvie, you were right to be worried. I think we're going to have a lot of trouble with that fellow before we're done with him. And to my notion what the Government were afraid of was that Winston Churchill was going to try and out 'em over this dilly-dally of theirs about rearming the country, and took advantage of Winston Churchill being a friend of the King to down the pair of them at one go. I mean to say if they're not frightened of Winston Churchill, why didn't Baldwin make him Minister of Defence? I reckon the reason was that if he had Winston Churchill would have been too big for the Cabinet. I reckon the blooming Cabinet would have cracked with him inside it. I listened-in very carefully this evening to the B.B.C.'s account of what Baldwin told Parliament, and what I kept saying to myself was 'Why didn't you put it to the King last October that if he meant to go on with the business after the divorce you'd have to resign right off the reel and let him call in somebody else to form a Government?' Well, suppose he had resigned, and the King had asked Winston Churchill to form

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a government? That would have meant a General Election, you'll say. All right, the country would have had a chance to say whether it wanted to come to terms with Hitler or not."

"Your idea is that the King's domestic affairs wouldn't have come into it at all?" John asked.

"Exactly."

"Yes, but you must remember the American papers were already discussing the King's domestic affairs and that if Baldwin had resigned they would have published the reason. In that case the election would have been fought on the attitude of the country to the King's marriage, not to Hitler. No, I hold no brief for the Government, but I don't see how the matter could have been settled without the country's knowing anything about it. What I object to is the way in which the country was told. It was deliberately presented as a constitutional crisis—an attempt by the King to override his Ministers. I don't say that public opinion might not have shown a majority against the King's marriage if the issue was presented to them fairly. In that case without doubt the King would have accepted the popular verdict. What I resent is that the Government didn't really know what the popular verdict would be and therefore deliberately prejudiced public opinion in order to secure a verdict in their favour. The technique was the technique of party politics. A Government in power goes to the country at the most favourable moment for itself, not for the Opposition. I've no doubt whatever that some Members of the Government were afraid the King would be a menace to their skrimshanking over unemployment and might in time force upon them a social policy for which they were not prepared. Leave Churchill out of it. They saw a much greater menace looming in a Labour Government with a clear majority and a socially progressive King. I've had an opportunity during these last two days to test the hatred of the monied classes for a man whom they suspect of being willing to 'let them down', as they put it. The King's marriage was a glorious opportunity to get him out of the way. Any King of England who has forgotten that his only duty was to the more prosperous of his subjects and dared to suppose he had an equal duty to the less prosperous has paid for it. Richard II, Charles I, James II, they all paid. And so would Frederick Prince of Wales if he had come to the Throne."

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"Goodness," Mrs Hanshaw exclaimed, "was there ever a Prince of Wales called Frederick?"

Her husband winked at John.

"My number's going up with Ma. But that's a new one on me, right enough."

"Frederick Prince of Wales was the father of George III, but he died before he became King," John said. "To come back to to-day. The Government were careful to get the Opposition on their side by spreading rumours that the King had Fascist sympathies, and unfortunately our comic blackshirts of the British Union espoused the King's side with enthusiasm, which frightened those Labour donkeys into being more conservative than the Conservatives."

"Well, I hope he'll be happy," said Mrs Hanshaw. "I'm sure if ever a man deserved to be happy dear King Edward did. And that's what we all feel round here."

"It's good to hear you say that, Mrs Hanshaw," John told her. "It's good to hear the heart of England ticking away as steadily as that old black marble clock upon your mantelshelf."

"It won't be ticking there much longer," said the tombstone-maker.

"Oh goodness me, Fred, don't talk like that," his wife chided. "As if we weren't miserable enough to-night over our dear King without you starting off to start in about us moving next March. Would you like a cup of tea, Mr Ogilvie?"

"I'd love a cup of tea," John said.

It was a few minutes past ten o'clock at Erpingham Hall. From the radio set in a dusty corner of the library against a background of quartos and folios bound in calf and vellum a light voice was speaking:

"And now we all have a new King. I wish him and you, his people, happiness and prosperity with all my heart. God bless you all. God save the King!"

There were a few moments of silence before the announcer informed a mundane audience, the greatest audience ever gathered to listen to a man's words, that all B.B.C. transmitters would close down for the night.

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"Well, that's that," said Noll Erpingham, getting up to switch off.

"I wonder we weren't told again that prices on the Stock Exchange had rallied," John said. "That was the item of news which immediately followed the announcement of the abdication yesterday."

"That wasn't too good, was it?" Noll commented.

"It was despicable," Prudence ejaculated.

The three of them sat for a while as quiet as the busts of the ancient Greek and Roman worthies above the bookcases.

"All the same, John," Noll Erpingham said at last, "it wouldn't have done."

"No, I'm afraid it wouldn't," Prudence sighed.

"Well, we won't argue about that any more," John said.

On the next day he and Prudence were sitting in her room faintly perfumed with the potpourri of last summer's roses. The lattices were a-stream, and a spray of winter jasmine in timid bloom teased the panes at the wind's insistency.

"Just upon two years ago," John began abruptly, "Corinna fell in love with Sebastian Stern."

"Darling, I was rather in love with *you* when I was fourteen. I remember when you came back from Greece in 1917 and suggested taking me out with you to Citrano and Mother wouldn't let me go, and oh, what tears I shed."

"Yes, well, that's rather different."

"Not really, John darling. Girls of fourteen always cherish hopeless passions. It's part of their normal development. I'll have Sally cherishing a hopeless passion for somebody in another three years."

"Yes, but it's not quite as simple as all that," John said. "Sebastian fell in love with her. It was when we were in Citrano the winter before last."

He related what had happened.

"And I was a little emotionally handicapped by the memory of you once upon a time on that very spot where they had been sitting."

"Darling, of course you were," she said tenderly.

"Sebastian came to stay on the island last April, and it was perfectly clear to me that he was still devoted, although both of them

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kept their word and saw nothing of each other. Sebastian is now in Russia, but probably he'll be back fairly soon, and I ask myself if he is still in love with her and she at sixteen is still in love with him whether it would any longer be fair to impose this test of absolute separation without even correspondence. Don't forget Sebastian will be twenty-two in February."

"I agree with you, John. Of course, Corinna's life during these last two years has been one to keep her fancy fed, but on the other hand Sebastian has had every opportunity to find out more about life. Really, indeed, I think you *would* be wise to let them see more of each other presently because if they survive the test of absence they will have to pass the equally difficult test of each other's company. However, Sebastian may come back with different ideas next time, and don't you think Corinna may find him and herself changed?"

"Oh, yes, but I don't think it's mere romanticism which makes me doubt their change. And now there's something else I want to talk to you about. When we were at Grazia last year old Theodore Ladas suddenly asked me just before we left why I didn't marry Euphrosyne."

"John darling, what a splendid suggestion!" his sister exclaimed.

"You think it was?"

"I can't imagine a wiser step toward happiness. She's an enchanting girl. . . ."

"She'll be forty at the end of this month," John broke in. "You've not seen her for fourteen years."

"Well, I'm sure she's an equally delightful woman."

"As a matter of fact she is. And I believe I did make up my mind I would ask her if she would marry me."

He stopped.

"And why didn't you?" Prudence asked.

"Well, it was something Corinna said when I told her about Zoe. She seemed surprised that in little more than two years after her death I married her own mother. And I asked myself if she would criticize me again for marrying another woman. . . ."

"Nearly six years later now," Prudence said quickly. "And don't forget Corinna is a year older."

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"No, I don't believe she would mind. And after all if she and Sebastian love as they believe they love they'll be getting married in another two years. I'm amused at the way I'm talking, as if I only had to ask Euphrosyne to marry me to be at once accepted. She may think it a preposterous idea."

"She may," Prudence agreed. "But somehow I don't think she will. I remember wondering to myself when I was at Grazia why you hadn't fallen in love with her instead of Zoe. I never saw Zoe, but I did think Euphrosyne immensely . . . oh, attractive is such a dull word."

"I'll write to her to-night. If she says 'yes', I'll go to Lipsia at once. If she says 'no' . . . somewhere out of this country I must go. . . . Spain is impossible now. Italy equally so. France, perhaps, except that it will be so depressing if I'm forever being asked why England has done this or that to play into the hands of Germany. I think I'll take Corinna to Poland. I've never been there in winter . . . oh, well, that's not important."

"John, don't be annoyed with me if it's a stupid question. But what about Scottish Nationalism? I mean, are you no longer interested in it? Noll is so political nowadays that in self-defence I've had to take an intelligent interest in politics."

"At present the Scottish National Party is languishing," John replied, "because, like all revolutionary movements from time to time, it is suffering from the paralysis caused by retaining on its executive too many people who have outlived their galvanic utility. The batteries have run down and until they are recharged by new forces they will not function. Revolutionaries rarely grasp the fact that their arteries harden more rapidly than those of less fiery spirits. The Scottish National Party has become a close corporation in the hands of a clique. That clique did first-class pioneer work, but they were incapable of being more than pioneers, and unfortunately they want to stop younger men from using the path they have cut and who would be capable, having come to the work fresh, of carrying that path a stage further, when others will have to take their places, and so on until the objective is won. Frustrated by the timidity and respectability of the Executive some ardent spirits conceived the notion of short-circuiting—I don't know why I started off on this electrical metaphor; I don't believe I'm capable of sustaining it—well, these ardent spirits proposed to take action

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and were willing to give their own lives if such a sacrifice would rouse the country to face the future. I did not think such a sacrifice was worth making because I did not believe it would rouse the country and I used my influence to prevent the experiment's being made. I feel convinced that if the movement has any true vitality the time will very soon come when the present Executive find they have to give way to more vital men able to think in terms of 'no compromise'. I should regard it as a disaster for Scotland if such a compromise as the Government of Northern Ireland was attained, because that means graft, corruption, and intolerance, and the throttling of the country's life in the interest of the business community. With complete independence the business community could be kept in order. However, independence must wait. I do not think that the state of Europe justifies even any talk of direct action now. I believe anything like that might encourage Germany, and I could not associate myself with any kind of action that might encourage Germany. I believe that war is inevitable within five or six years. When that war is over Scotland will either shake herself free from the ghastly bureaucracy in which Britain will by then be enmeshed, or she will sink into the ignominious life in death of the servile state. We have never recovered the freedom we surrendered in order to defeat the Germans last time. We shall lose much more freedom next time and probably find it difficult to recover any. I have a hope that the next war may be so long-protracted that Europe to exist will have to federate, in which case obviously any predominant power could not be tolerated, and I should like to see ten millions as the extreme maximum population for any single one of the federated states. I could go on indefinitely discussing possibilities and contingencies, but it would be a waste of time. Suppose such a federation did not take place Scotland would have to choose what future she desired for herself, and I hope by that time the Scottish National Party will be strong enough to direct and justify her choice. Any more questions?"

"Really, what you're doing is just marking time," Prudence said.

"I think all of us at this moment who cannot play an active part in preparing for this struggle are just marking time. If I were an hereditary legislator like Noll . . ."

"What's that about me?" asked Noll, who had come into

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the room as his name was mentioned.

"I was going to tell Prudence that if I were an hereditary legislator like you I should spend all my time in the House of Lords preaching like Cato: 'Delenda est Carthago. Germany must be obliterated.'"

"Yes, but even that platform manner of yours, old boy, might be knocked off its length by the House of Lords. I've never had the nerve to get up on my feet yet. As far as speeches go I think I shall die an old maid. Are you having tea here or in the school-room, Prue?"

"With the children, I thought."

"Good. I'll get enough bread and jam," said Lord Erpingham. "Miss Marlowe's a bit more free with it than Nannie. By Jove, it's Simon's birthday to-morrow, isn't it? I suppose I'll have to go to church with you all."

"I think your heir would appreciate it on his tenth birthday," said Prudence.

"This Mass business is a fearful ordeal for me, John. I feel as I used to feel when I was learning the ladies' chain at my juvenile dancing-class. I was always in the wrong place at the right moment or in the right place at the wrong moment. It's the same at Mass. No sooner am I up on my legs than the whole of the rest of the congregation plunges down on their knees, and no sooner do I plunge down after them than they go rocketing up like pheasants."

After an uproarious tea in the schoolroom John, Prudence, and Noll went to listen to the six o'clock news in the library:

"The date of the Coronation will be the same as that fixed for King Edward's. There will, however, be an important change. As there is now a Queen, peeresses will wear coronets."

"My god," John groaned, "must we listen to any more of this winsome announceritis?"

Noll switched the set off.

"Noll, *was* that information for a few hundred people worth broadcasting to the country?" Prudence asked.

"I wish I'd thought of getting a B.B.C. announcer down here for Simon's birthday," said John.

"What on earth for?" Prudence asked.

"To play Puss in the Corner," he replied.

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That night John wrote to Euphrosyne Ladas:

*As from Tigh nan Ròn,
Shiel Islands, by Flodday, Scotland
December 12, 1936*

Dearest Euphrosyne,

Twenty-one years ago as I sat beside you on the sand at Grazia di Dio I watched you gazing out beyond the sea's horizon and thought how easily I could fall in love with you, and as I thought it I put the thought from my mind because it did not seem a time to be thinking of love. Nearly two years later, when we had all spent that day in Delos and I instead of looking at the ruins had sat with Zoe by that reedy stream, I talked to you as we leant over the rails of the Argo in the rosy violet of the sunset. Something you said about Zoe and me prompted me to ask you whether you were wondering if you would ever fall in love as you knew you deserved to love, and I reminded you that you had been granted poetry. You said you would rather sit by the reeds on the shores of Delos in perfect communion with somebody than write greater poetry than Sappho, and you added that Sappho only wrote because she was denied that perfect communion. And I asked you if you knew I was on the verge of falling in love with you when I first met you in Lipsia. You answered that I could be thankful I did not topple over because people on the verge of falling in love sometimes did fall and often hurt themselves. And I told you how right you were because it was nonsense to talk about the verge of love. I said one either loved or did not love. I know now that what prevented my falling in love with you twenty-one years ago was some instinct that I was not ready to give you what you would have expected and that I would run the risk of disappointing you, which egoism would soon have turned into the disappointment of myself. You may remember I once told you I had a fancy to divide my life into the four winds. You asked which wind was blowing then, and I told you the south wind, and you reminded me that the south wind brought the rain. Well, it did, and when Zoe was drowned another wind began to blow for me. My married life was completely happy, and when Athene died the north wind began to blow. I supposed that what emotion it brought would be expressed by my love for my daughter

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and by my love for a political ideal I dreamed might be expressed by Scotland.

I now know that neither is enough. That political ideal cannot be expressed now. The state of Europe forbids all hope of it. I realize that I am one of many millions at the mercy of the cataclysmic period in which we have to fulfil the Divine purpose.

Corinna still loves and I feel sure is still loved. I know that Sebastian Stern would have had the honesty and courage to tell me if he had ceased to love her, and so when he comes back from Russia—possibly in a month or two—I shall have to accept and recognize their love for each other.

Before I left Grazia fourteen months ago I was on the verge—the verge again!—of asking you to marry me. I did not do so because when I was telling Corinna about Zoe she expressed her surprise at my having married so soon after her death. I had a fear she would think I was doing a wrong to Athene's memory if I were to ask you to marry me, and so I postponed asking you; but that fear has vanished. I did not tell Corinna that I was going to write this letter. I am staying with Prudence at the moment and Corinna is on the island; and if you say 'no' I shall never tell her I asked you.

Dearest Euphrosyne, I have waited, perhaps you will think too long, but I seem at this moment still to be sitting beside you upon the sand between the orange-grove and the sea as if we had remained all these twenty-one years motionless like the figures in the Primavera.

So will you marry me? You said last October year that swift as a shooting-star the fancy passed through your mind that I should return to Grazia before this year was out. Cable that you will marry me, and you will be right.

I read through what I've written and I am depressed by the clumsiness of it all. Yet if you love me as I love you I do not think that the clumsiness will matter.

John

Simon's tenth birthday, which began with what his children all considered the exquisite treat of watching the twelfth Lord Erpingham at Mass, ended with a display of indoor fireworks at eight o'clock, after which three exhausted grown-ups sat down to their dinner.

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In the library afterwards the wireless was switched on to hear the Archbishop of Canterbury deliver the epilogue to the abdication.

When it was finished the three listeners gazed at one another.

"Gud!" John ejaculated. "Well, God may be a jealous God, but I don't think He can be very jealous of Gud."

"Noll, it isn't true! He can't have said those things!" Prudence gasped.

"I think perhaps I'd better be received into your Church, Prue, early in the coming year," Noll muttered.

"Noll, you don't really mean that, do you? You're joking, aren't you?" Prudence asked eagerly.

"No, I'm not joking. I was thinking this morning that it was rather puzzling for the children the way things are. And the Archbishop of Canterbury has pressed the button," said the twelfth Lord Erpingham.

Six days after John sent that fateful letter to Euphrosyne there were two telegrams in the mail-bag when the *Flora* reached the island.

Corinna was in the library with him.

"Darling, why are you staring at those two telegrams without opening them?" she asked.

He tore open the envelope of the first:

*Never so pleased about anything in my life
expect you here earliest possible moment*

Theodore Ladas

Then he opened the second:

Yes

Euphrosyne

He sat in silence, staring at the single word.

"Nothing the matter, Father?" Corinna asked anxiously.

"I wrote to Euphrosyne when I was at Erpingham to ask her to marry me. And she says 'yes'."

Corinna ran to put her arms round him.

"Darling, I am so happy for you," she murmured, her cheek against his. "Oh, I'm so glad, so very very very glad!"

"Blessed by youth and by age," he sighed, giving her the cable

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from Theodore Ladas to read. "You don't think it's a disloyalty to your mother?"

"No, no. You didn't think that when Grandfather married Aunt Elise. How old were you then?"

"I was seventeen."

"And I'll be seventeen in just a week or two over a year. And girls are older than boys. I feel just as old as Padraig."

"Poor Padraig, if we go rushing off to Greece it's going to spoil his Christmas vacation. He'd better meet us in London. I'll wire him. He might get an Oxford friend to come and keep him company on the island. Or he might like to go out to Switzerland for his beloved ski-ing."

"He's working very hard for his Schools next June," Corinna reminded her father.

"Yes, he'll probably prefer to put in a good month's grind here. However, he'll be able to come out to Lipsia for the Long Vacation before he goes up to tackle his oriental languages at Cambridge," John added.

That evening he showed his daughter a letter he had just written.

TIGH NAN RÒN,
December 18, '36

Dear Sebastian,

I am going to marry Euphrosyne Ladas, and that means Corinna and I will be going out to Lipsia at once. I gathered from your last letter that you were expecting to leave Russia soon after the New Year. It would be jolly if you came to Greece later in the spring. If you do decide to come I think it would be right to take your father and mother into your confidence when you go home before you come to Greece. I hope to hear of more ops. Write to me at Grazia di Dio, Island of Lipsia, Greece.

*Yours,
John*

Corinna gave him back the letter, her eyes shining.

"There's the question of a postscript," her father said. "Shall I send him your love?"

"Darling, please," she whispered.

"But suppose he has just made up his mind that it was all a

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dream?" John pressed. "Mightn't it be kinder not to send your love? You don't want him to reproach himself. We agreed long ago that wouldn't be fair."

"If he didn't love me any longer he would have told you so," Corinna insisted with absolute assurance.

"Yes, I'm sure he would. All right. There's the postscript: *Corinna sends you her love.*"

"Darling, do you know what's the first thing I'm going to pack to-morrow?" she asked.

"You'll have a fierce time getting clothes in London," John said. "Though, as a matter of fact I wouldn't bother too much about clothes in London. You and I will have to retire to the mainland until all is ready for the wedding, and you can get clothes in Athens."

"It isn't anything to do with clothes. It's that wooden spoon the *zampognari* gave us just two years ago to-day. Don't you remember? *Cras amet qui nunquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.* And the date was December 18th, 1934. *Let who ne'er loved love to-morrow.* That was me. *And who has loved love again.* That was you. Did you tell Euphrosyne about Sebastian and me?"

"I did. I told her that day we found you with your little bronze Aphrodite by the sea."

"What did she say?"

"She was very sympathetic."

"Yes, she was," said Corinna pensively. "She told me to leave my bathing-dress at Grazia as a votive offering to Aphrodite. I suppose she has always loved you."

"Why do you say that?"

"Things come back to me now. I was rather dense at the time. Or perhaps I was too wrapped up in my own thoughts," Corinna said.

"It was you who stopped me from asking Euphrosyne then to marry me. You were so severe on the short time between Zoe's death and my marrying your mother."

"Well, that was just being wrapped up in myself, wasn't it?" she observed, shaking her head disapprovingly at the young egoist of not yet fifteen. "I think I'm more sensible nowadays."

"It's not so very long ago."

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"It seems a long time ago to me," Corinna declared. "But you do think I'm much older, don't you?" she pressed.

"Much older," he answered with a smile.

"No, you're not to laugh at me."

"Dearest, I'm not laughing. Wasn't that letter I showed you a sign I did realize how much older you were? And now there's a minor problem to be solved. Do we or do we not take Mairi with us? I think she might be rather lonely here with only old Mrs Macpherson and Sandy Macaulay."

"Oh, I do think she ought to go with us," Corinna decided.

"Well, I feel that," John agreed. "You and I will fly, and I'll get a courier to look after Mairi and the luggage. I think we'll just manage to reach Grazia in time for Euphrosyne's birthday on the thirtieth."

"Darling, I am so happy for you," Corinna said. "I'm glad you're at last beginning to appreciate flying."

"And so you're going to marry again, John?" Elise Ogilvie was saying to him. "You waited longer than your father."

"No," John answered. "My mother had been dead nearly ten years when he married you."

"He was only forty-five," she reminded him. "You are fifty-four. Why are you smiling?"

"I was thinking of the superiority of daughters over sons," John replied.

"Now, you know I never agreed with you about that," Elise said. "And you must admit that David has done very well, though you did always think I spoilt him."

"Wait a minute, dear Elise, before you sing the superiority of the male. When I told Corinna I was going to marry again she threw her arms round my neck and made me feel I was proposing to do the one thing in the world she most wanted me to do. When my father told me he was going to marry you we were sitting beside a narrow path above the glacier at Grindelwald and I had such a shock that I nearly rolled over the edge. He asked me rather irritably to try not to look so dazed by his news and I told him he was so old to be marrying again."

"John! How *could* you be so tactless?"

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"I warned you daughters were superior," he grinned.

"What did poor Alec say?"

"He was extremely annoyed, and as I remember, expressed a hope that I would presently acquire some sense of proportion. And then you got appendicitis, or perityphlitis as they called it in those days, and I felt sorry for him and tried in the awkward way of a boy of seventeen to be sympathetic. It's no use, dearest Elise, I prefer daughters. Indeed, looking back at my life I think I can say I have always liked most women better than most men. I was pretty grateful to you in those days for the humanizing effect you had on my father. And I expect I should add on myself. Certainly home was a much pleasanter place with you presiding over it, bless you."

"Dear John, you were always very sweet to me. I wish I'd met Eu . . . now wait a minute, I must get her name right . . . Euphrosyne. Yes, I do wish I'd met her. And when do you think you'll be married?"

"That will depend on her, but I hope in January. I expect Corinna and I will go to the mainland for a while and then come back for the marriage. Corinna can get herself clothes in Athens. . . ."

"Well, John, it will be impossible for us to manage much now with all the Christmas shopping. And you're leaving on the 27th."

John had already sent a brief note to Miriam Stern to tell her of his approaching marriage. He went round to see her on the afternoon of his arrival in London.

"You're looking just a little bit tired," he told her. "I suppose you've been overdoing yourself in the search for Christmas presents."

"What you really mean, John, is that I'm looking a little bit old. I was seventy-three last September, you know. And you are going to marry Euphrosyne Ladas, John. I know you frown at old letters, but I must read you an extract from one of yours written from Salonica on August 25th, 1916:

"I did have a chance to fall in love with a girl. She was a lovely Greek called Euphrosyne, but at that time I was still obsessed by the superiority of action over anything and everything. To fall in love seemed the most feeble kind of weakness. So I let the moment pass. What a relief to have somebody to whom I

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can write and assume that the young woman would immediately have fallen in love with me! Yes, I allowed the moment to pass, and I look back at her now not as the visible token of a misseae influence but as the symbol of the true heart of Hellas.

"I read that letter in this morning-room, John, where you and I first met when you were seventeen and Emil brought you back to tea and you had honey from Hymettus which some Dutch friends of mine in Athens had sent me."

"How well I remember that room as it looked in those days with its grey walls and sea-green velvet curtains," said John.

"That was in winter," Miriam continued, "but I remember more vividly a Sunday afternoon in March when Emil had just been confiding in me that you were despising him as a Jew. And then suddenly you called. I can see you now, John, as you came in. You had a wonderful complexion in those days and your brown hair was rather ruffled and you were smiling in that shy way in which you still smile sometimes. You did just now when you came in. And I looked at you, and that was the moment when I no longer looked at you as a schoolboy, and I was rather horrified at myself. And sixteen years later I was reading that letter from Salonica in this same room, and thinking of you as you were when you were a boy, and I remember regretting just a little that you had not fallen in love with this girl with the beautiful name. I thought you were letting action get the better of your mind, and that your emotion required love. I expect I wished as I'd often enough wished before that I was twenty years younger. Well, John, you're now just about a year older than I was when I read that letter. I think you're very lucky, don't you?"

"Dearest Miriam, you know I have an Hellenic dread of rousing the envy of the gods."

"I fancy I should like Euphrosyne. Something tells me I should," Miriam murmured, half to herself.

"I know you would, and she would, I know, like you. She has written very good poetry in Greek. Her English verse was accomplished, but the Greek was a great deal more than accomplished."

"I hope you'll bring her to England, John, before I'm limping about on two sticks. How old is she, by the way?"

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"She'll be forty at the end of this month."

"And I was already on the edge of thirty-eight in Cracow," Miriam murmured with a pensive shake of her head. "That's enough of me," she went on abruptly. "Quite enough. Tell me now about Corinna."

"I had a letter from Sebastian to-day which crossed one I sent to him. Here it is."

*Poste Restante, Moscow
December 16*

Dear John,

I'm coming back to England in the middle of February, and after a little time at home I'd like to come and stay at Tigh nan Ròn. I'll quite understand if you write and say you think I'd better not come. I had a shot at my first string quartet a month or two back, and it's come out a mixture of Raff and riff-raff. No opus number for that. I gave the set of Nocturnes Opus 2 after consideration. And I've composed a serenade for strings which isn't so bad. I'll wait till Father's seen it before I decide whether I'll give it an opus number. And now I'm working at that Sixth Piano Concerto fragment of Beethoven's, but please don't mention that to anybody.

Yours,

Sebastian

"What's this Sixth Piano Concerto plan?" asked the grandmother of the young composer.

"Oh, I say, I oughtn't to have shown you that," John exclaimed. "Forget about it, will you? That letter means Sebastian is still in love with Corinna, and I'm just a little relieved because in the letter that crossed this I invited him out to Lipsia in the spring and I sent him Corinna's love. And then when I'd posted it I got in a panic that perhaps it was just exactly what he would not want. I'm so glad now I did send it."

"You're still taking both *au grand sérieux*?" she asked.

"I can't help doing so, Miriam. Prudence was inclined to scoff at first when I told her about them, but she came round to my point of view. I warned Sebastian in my letter that before he came out to Greece he must confide in his father and mother. If Julius and Leonora are inclined to be hurt with me for not saying anything

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to them long ago, I rely on you to defend my caution. I debated whether I'd tell them now before I went to Greece, but I think it'll be better if Sebastian tells them himself."

"It would be better," she agreed. "Shall I have an opportunity to see Corinna before you leave?"

"Of course. She'll pay you a visit. I think you'll be surprised at the way she's developed. She really is a testimonial to my educational system, and that's not the mere fondness either of a father or a crank."

"Tell me, John, do you suppose that Euphrosyne has been in love with you all these years? It's strange she should never have married."

"Oh, no, no. I can quite understand her not being married. She was an extremely fastidious young woman. Ours has been a curious kind of friendship. If she wrote to me or if I wrote to her it always seemed as if it were a regular correspondence even though years used to elapse between letters, and when I saw her again in May last year I was quite unaware of any long passage of time since I had seen her last. The friendship was picked up as naturally as if it had never been interrupted. And now that we are going to be married I have a sort of feeling it was arranged like this twenty years ago."

"It will be a happy marriage, John," she said. "That with the wisdom of an old woman I know."

"You said just now, Miriam, how lucky I was. I don't have to tell you, do I, that the luckiest thing that happened to me was meeting you when I was seventeen?"

She went across to the Steinway grand and played a melody John had never heard.

"It's an old Swedish folk-song, John. *When I was seventeen*, it is called." She played it through again. "It has a sharp fragrance, has it not? Like a border of pinks in an old-fashioned garden. One never sees nowadays those June pinks of long ago."

"Yes," he reflected. "You taught me the most precious gift life can offer."

"What was that?" she asked, rising from the piano and walking slowly back to her chair, that once straight back a little bent, those once clear-cut gestures now slightly blurred by age.

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"You taught me to remember what I was given and to forget what I gave."

"I don't know how I managed to teach you that, John."

"By being you. That was the whole lesson."

David had turned up at 57 Church Row on Christmas Eve, and Ellen and Padraig Fitzgerald had been invited to Christmas dinner.

"Well, John," said David, raising his glass of champagne at dinner that Christmas night, "here's happiness. I shall soon have to think seriously of this marriage business myself."

"Indeed, I wish you would, dear David," his mother said earnestly.

"I can't find the right young woman to cast for the part of my wife," he declared.

"Why can't you?" Corinna asked.

"The contract's too binding," David replied. "It's a pity you're my niece. I might push you into stardom if I were your husband."

"How do you know I'd accept you?" Corinna demanded indignantly.

"Wouldn't you?"

"Certainly not."

"What a foul child you are! You look out you don't die an old maid."

"I won't be an old maid, David," she affirmed.

"You'll never be an old maid, Corinna Mary Ellen," her god-mother put in warmly. "Never!"

"Don't you be too sure," David jeered. "The producer who signs you on will have to be a pretty tough guy. Won't he, Daddy?"

"I never call Father 'daddy'. And you know I don't, *Uncle David*."

"All right. None of that, now. Pax, and I'll drink your health. Ladies and gentlemen, in rising to propose the health of the future Queen of the Moon . . ."

"If you go on laughing at me," Corinna warned him, "I'll tell Aunt Elise a story I know about you at Lipsia."

"About David at Lipsia?" Lady Ogilvie asked in surprise.

Corinna picked up an orange from the dish. "Does that remind

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you of anything, David?" she demanded.

"Marmalade," he replied.

"No," said Corinna. "It ought to remind you of Miss Janet Meriday. Ha-ha! You didn't think I knew about something that happened when I wasn't two, did you?"

"I suppose Prudence told you?" David asked.

"No, it wasn't Aunt Prudence and it wasn't Uncle Noll. It was Mr Ladas."

"I'm quite at sea," Lady Ogilvie proclaimed.

"Shall I go on, David?" Corinna challenged.

"Of course you can. She's been married four times since then, and looked well on the way to being married a fifth time when I was last in Hollywood."

"Who *is* Miss Janet Meriday?" the bewildered Lady Ogilvie asked.

"She's a film-star whom David was in love with when he went in Mr Rigden's yacht to Lipsia, and he used to go bathing with her on a lovely beach beside an orange-grove," Corinna related.

"In my hot-headed youth," David grinned. "June, flaming June, what? When we were twenty-one and all that. At least I was. And Janet had only been twenty-three for about four years."

"Did you actually propose to her, David?" his mother asked.

"I didn't marry her anyway," David replied. "And what about you, Padraig? How many girls have you proposed to?"

"I won't be twenty-one till next July. I'm safe at present," Padraig replied.

"But, Padraig, seriously now, you broth of a boy. Have you a girl yet?" David asked.

"Don't you tell him, Padraig," Corinna urged.

"I believe she's cuckoo on you herself," David laughed.

"Pooh!" Corinna ejaculated.

"Padraig, my boy, take an old man's advice and have nothing to do with her," David advised. "She'll fly off to the moon with some dashing airman and you'll be left holding the baby."

"David, David," his mother murmured.

"Little things please little minds," Corinna commented scornfully.

"Oh god, that's good," David laughed boisterously. "Left

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holding the baby, and then says with a face like Lady Macbeth 'little things please little minds'."

Padraig was going off next day to stay with a friend, and he had a moment or two alone with John before returning to his aunt's flat in Chelsea.

"I won't be seeing you till July because I'll have to wait for my viva," he said.

"I hope you'll have a triumph in the Schools," John told him.

"I think I ought to get a Second," Padraig murmured cautiously. "Well, good-bye, Uncle John . . ."

"It's John nowadays."

"I hope you'll be very happy," Padraig continued. "It's wonderful to think I might get a post not too far away from Lipsia." He hesitated. "I suppose I've been rather a disappointment to you, haven't I?" he asked.

"My dear boy, not in the least. I think you've stuck to your guns splendidly. You chose for yourself. It's no good pretending your father would approve of this reconciliation with the Saxon. He wouldn't. I look back to the day at Tinoran I first saw you when you were only about two. Your father said something to you in Irish and you answered him in English, 'I won't!' Your mother said it was because you didn't like your father's English accent in Irish, but perhaps you'd made up your mind even then to be one of His Britannic Majesty's Consuls. Well, we'll be seeing each other in July. And mind you rout the examiners."

On Boxing Day there was a youthful party at Belmore House to which John took Corinna.

"My dear," said Leonora to him when they were sitting together watching a fox-trot, "we're getting old. You can try to dodge it by going off to Greece and getting married to your lovely Euphrosyne whom I hope I shall see while I have some traces left of pre-war vitality; but, John, we're getting old. Look at Monica. She'll be seventeen in May. I just can't believe it."

"She's going to be a good-looking woman," John said. "She's very like Miriam of course."

"Well, I think she is, John; but Miriam says Erika's more like what she was as a child. And Monica and Erika don't look a bit alike to me."

John turned his eyes to where Erika, now thirteen and a half,

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was dancing with a friend of her brother's, a solemn fat boy of about fifteen.

"There is quite a considerable likeness as a matter of fact, in spite of her red hair," John said. "And there's another likeness I notice."

"Which is that?"

"Between Veronica and Yan."

"John! Why, Veronica's exactly like me and Yan's just like Astrid."

"Yes, I know, but the Stern does link them with a likeness. Yan has improved. He's pretty solemn still, but I suppose if your mind is taken up with the differential calculus and the binomial theorem at just fifteen you do get a solemn look. How old's Veronica now?"

"She'll be thirteen in February . . . and Sebastian will be twenty-two. John, wouldn't it be wonderful if in another two or three years Corinna and he fell in love with one another?"

It was difficult not to tell Leonora about the state of affairs for the last two years, but John managed to refrain and presently he was talking to Emil who had just put in an appearance at the party.

"You'll be amused to hear, John, that I volunteered my services to make a confidential report about the Eastern Mediterranean and that they were declined. It is not considered that the brains of communists can be usefully employed. The Government is still completely unaware that unless it can reach an arrangement with the Soviets this country stands no earthly chance against Germany in another war."

"I think it was a pity," John said, "that you people on the Left quacked such a lot about collective security when what you really meant was an alliance with Russia, which, with the Franco-Soviet Pact already made, should not have been difficult to achieve. But no, you ran away from the reality and preferred the nominalism of the Popular Front and Collective Security."

"There's justice in your criticism, John. Nevertheless, if an alliance with Russia had been openly advocated it would have come to nothing because Right and Left in this country are more afraid of communism than they are of Hitler, and I think that's true of France, for I don't feel that the Franco-Soviet Pact has any realistic basis. The same can be said of Poland. What exasperates

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me is the complete failure to grasp what Stalin is out for. All this elimination of Trotskyism which has been going on throughout this year, and will go on all next year too probably, is a definite sign that Stalin has no interest in creating a world revolution. I remember your saying to me once that you couldn't understand why the Russian Revolution hadn't thrown up a Napoleon. Well, Stalin is the answer. He is a Russian Napoleon with this difference: he is not compelled to conquer Western Europe before he conquers the East."

"And do you approve of what looks rather like turning communism into imperialism?" John asked.

"If Stalin's experiment is successful, it will demonstrate to the rest of the world the revitalizing constructive power of communism," Emil replied. "A practical example is bound to have more influence than the most elaborate propaganda. The attitude will be that if other States do retain capitalism so much the better for Russia."

"Young Sebastian was enthusiastic about Russia when he was over here in the spring. I'm bound to say I was impressed by what he told me. I'm beginning to dread less the effect on the human mind of communism. I may become a complete convert yet. Partly this is due to the rise of National Socialism. When you and I and Julius used to argue about communism after the war, not even Fascism had appeared."

"You were very much attracted to Fascism at first," Emil reminded him.

"Oh, I was. But it failed to produce any great man and degenerated rapidly. I should imagine its association with German National Socialism will finish it off within a few years. What do you think about the chances of avoiding another great war, Emil?"

"I see no chance at all. The only speculation in that regard worth making is the date. I don't myself fancy the Germans will deliberately force a war before 1942 at the earliest. They are planning to win the next time. The trouble is that we cannot force a war for at least another three years, by which time they'll be strong enough to take up any challenge we offer, though no doubt they'd prefer to wait. If they'd known in 1914 that we were coming in they would have waited then to complete their naval programme."

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"It's a pity you Communists succeeded in infecting this country with pacifism, isn't it?" John asked with a smile.

"What else could we do? We were no better able to foresee Nazi Germany than the British Government was. All through the 'twenties there were strong forces at work in this country to provoke war with the Soviets. A successful imperialistic war then would have postponed communism for a century. And now you're off to Greece, eh? Fantastic to think of that little man Metaxas trying to laconize Hellas at this date. Remember me to Theodore Ladas and of course to Withers, if you see him again. I fancy our people are hoping to pull off an alliance with Turkey. It won't do them much good if they succeed. They should devote themselves to securing an alliance with the Soviets and push the Turks out of Constantinople, in fact push them back beyond the Taurus. Greece too should cultivate Russia, but I suppose Metaxas will get tied up with Germany. Well, John, we shan't be seeing you for some time. I'm sorry Astrid couldn't be here this evening; she has a horrid cold. I think you're a brave man to be marrying again at the age of fifty-four, but my mother proclaims that you are being very wise. And I daresay she knows better than I what's good for you."

It was not until the youthful party was over that John had an opportunity for a few words with Julius, before he took Corinna back to Church Row.

"Julius, you never told me your verdict on Sebastian's *Opus One*."

"It's pretty good, really," Julius replied. "I never wrote anything like so good at his age. Look, John, I'm not going to bid you a long farewell. I've never seen Greece and I think I'd like to have a look at it. When Sebastian comes back I believe I'll make him come out there with me. I'd love to bring Leonora, but she'd be worrying all the time about the children. We're sending Wolfgang to St James's next autumn. He's pretty bright with his books, and he's going to be a good athlete, I believe. But there's not a note of music in him."

"Your plan to come out with Sebastian is splendid," John said. "Get out in time for Independence Day which is the Annunciation, and then we'll make a *giro* round the islands in April, which is the best month."

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"O.K. March 25th. That's a date."

"You'll like Euphrosyne, Julius."

"I bet I will. The question is will she like me?"

"You'll bring your violin, won't you?" John asked.

"Oh, I'm to fiddle my way into her graces, am I? O.K., John, I'll do all my tricks. My god, Corinna's growing up into a beauty, you know," he exclaimed, looking across the room to where she was talking with much animation to Yan and his solemn fat friend.

BELMORE HOUSE,
EAST HEATH ROAD, HAMPSTEAD, N.W.3
February 21st, 1937

My dearest John,

Sebastian's twenty-first birthday is past and Julius and he have left for Greece and I am here with only Miriam to talk to about the news that Sebastian gave us. I ought not to say only Miriam because nobody could be more understanding than she. When Sebastian first told us my momentary reaction was 'why on earth didn't John tell us this two years ago?', but then I realized how right you had been not to overweight them both with the doubts and vigilance of older people: and then as I looked at Sebastian I saw in his eyes and in his whole attitude the Julius of that autumn of 1912 in New York, and my heart was too full of anything except joy for those two and for us and for you. It's so wonderful too that you in your happiness with Euphrosyne should no longer now be looking forward with dread to losing Corinna next year. I think they should be married next year, don't you? Why shouldn't marriage be granted the romance of young love instead of being regarded as a dangerous economic experiment?

Julius and Sebastian are going to linger a while in Italy on the way. Julius wants to visit the old bishop who received him into the Church when he was the parish priest of Citrano. I can't remember the name, but it's a little town in the hills between Naples and Rome. And naturally he wants to visit Citrano too. No doubt you'll hear from Italy when they will reach Lipsia. I enclose a little note for Corinna, telling her how glad I am; but I leave to you the right moment to give it to her. If you haven't told her that Sebastian intended to confide in us, don't

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give it to her until after Sebastian has told her himself.

It will be a quarter of a century this autumn since you and Julius arrived in New York. Oh, John, do let's all live for another quarter of a century. I think it'll be lots of fun. I'll still be quite a kid—only 70. Julius will be 77, and you'll be 80, darling! Oh, I forgot Euphrosyne is five years younger than I. So between you you'll be younger than Julius and I. Sebastian will be 47, and Corinna, even Corinna, will be 41, and if one of their children is as precocious as their parents we may be two great-grandfathers and a great-grandmother. John, we've just got to do it.

Dearest love to you, and please say to Euphrosyne I'm pining to meet her.

Your loving

Leonora

John gave this letter to Euphrosyne to read, but put aside Leonora's letter to Corinna.

"I think Sebastian should tell her himself," he said.

"Most certainly, John."

They were sitting in the room which had been turned into his study: it was the bedroom in which he had slept on his first visit to Lipsia, and it had been on the terrace of that room he had decided that Grazia di Dio had the loveliest site of any house he had seen. To-day at February's end even the Aegean was a monotone of grey and dirty white in the savage southerly gale that was driving the rain against the french-windows with squall after squall, squalls that swept visibly across the sea like huge haggard ghosts in soiled and tattered shrouds levelling the waves in their track to what seemed dark frozen ponds of wind-blown powdered ice.

"March is coming in like a lion with hydrophobia," John said.

"And will go out like a lamb, which is just what we want, my dearest. You will see we shall be able to give orders for the mats to be taken down from the *portokallon* and let in again that magic company of Primavera. John, this is really a most charming letter from Leonora. I am quite longing to meet her."

John was consulting the calendar.

"Let me see. March 25th falls upon our Thursday in Holy Week. I hope they'll arrive two or three days before. How

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exasperating this idiotic schism is between the two halves of the Catholic Church," John exclaimed abruptly. "I hate the idea of our having to make our Easter Communion on a different day and in a different cathedral. I didn't mind the double wedding. In fact it was a genuine example of being able to eat one's cake and have it."

"John," Euphrosyne asked, "would it give you great pleasure if I were to become a Latin?"

"No, my dearest," he answered, taking her slim white hand and raising it to his lips, "no, my dearest. Such a gesture now would have a political not a religious significance, and I would not for the world that any action of yours should seem to support this flirtation Metaxas is now enjoying with Mussolini."

"Ignoble time-serving," she murmured contemptuously.

"You and I represent together a Catholic Church once again united. We will neither of us give cause for offence either to Rome or to Byzantium. If we have a child . . ."

"We must have a child, John," she said in that voice which always sounded to John as if marble spoke, and now against the booming of the wind seemed to breathe the immutable calm of absolute assurance. "I have waited many years for that somebody with whom I could feel sure that the mingled life of us was the immortal essence of this earth."

"Euphrosyne, you wondered if you would ever find that somebody long ago after that day we went to Delos in the *Argo*."

"You remember?"

"Indeed, I do remember. That was when I said you might fall in love and lose your poetry and you replied that you would rather sit by the reeds on the shore of Delos in perfect communion with somebody than write greater poetry than Sappho."

"You and Zoe were sitting there beside that small reedy stream round which grows mandragora. You were both in white, and after the dead whiteness of the ruins, white as bleached bones, you two seemed so live a white. I wrote a poem about you both that night."

"You never published it," John said.

"No, but if we have a child I will read it to you, my dearest dearest, and then you will know so intimately what your Euphrosyne was in that spring of twenty years ago."

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"You will not mind if our child is baptized a Latin?" John asked.

"A child? a child?" shouted Theodore Ladas with almost the resonance of his vocal prime as he appeared in the doorway. "Are you two going to have a child?"

"Not yet, inquisitive old woman that you are," his daughter teased. "And how did you and your two canes draw near so quietly that we did not hear your rataplan?"

"The wind is blowing great guns," said Theodore Ladas. "I can't hear the sound of my own voice above it."

However, John and Euphrosyne knew that it was not the wind which had drowned the tap of his canes but a distance of twenty years.

"Yes, but you were talking about a child," the potential grandsire insisted. "And let me say I very much hope you're in earnest. I'm so damned happy to have you both here married that I'm ashamed to want more. Still, you know, Euphrosyne is her mother's daughter. Aglaia has my beak, and it is a beak in these days."

"We'd been talking about that disastrous split for Christendom when Rome and Byzantium set up in opposition," John explained. "And I was asking Euphrosyne whether she would mind if a child of ours were a Latin."

"Not at all, not at all," Theodore Ladas declared. "The house will return to its old allegiance—ecclesiastically," he added. "The pity of it is that these infernal Italians over in the Dodecanese are using the keys of Peter as political weapons, and the ruffians will be using them presently as knuckledusters. As for a bantam like Metaxas thinking he can crow as loud as that Leghorn rooster Mussolini"—Theodore Ladas stopped to ease his neck of the wrath that was rising to choke him—"it was all we could stomach when Venizelos signed that confounded friendship pact or whatever it was, but we knew Venizelos would never surrender any Greek interest or security. You can't be sure with a fellow like Metaxas. Once a German lover always a German lover, and if Metaxas is making friends with Italy, that's in the German interest. I hope the King won't let him go too far, but he has let him destroy our free Press and start concentration camps and play the petty tyrant in all sorts of ways. Well, if he does come to any arrangement with

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the Italians he'll live to regret it. I was looking through the sepulchral epigrams in the Greek Anthology this morning and I came across one written about the Greeks who died in defence or their country against another Roman dictator, Sulla. They're all alike, these dictators."

He fumbled in his pocket.

"I wrote it out to send to one of the Athens newspapers to see if these uncultured Metaxist scoundrels would have the impudence to censor it.

οἱ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους δεινὸν στήσαντες Ἄρῃα
κεῖνται, ἀριστεύεις σύμβολα δεικνύμενοι
οὐ γάρ τις μετὰ νῶτα τυπείς θάνει, ἀλλ' ἅμα πάντες
ᾤλοντο κρυφίῳ καὶ δολερῷ θανάτῳ.

"Those who arose and took arms to fight against Roman aggression," John improvised.

"Lie here exhibiting tokens of valour and . . ." Euphrosyne paused. "I want either a four-syllable synonym for valour, John, or a supplementary monosyllable."

"Valour and worth," John suggested.

"It's rather a tame amplification," she objected. "Never mind, do the next hexameter."

"None of them died from a wound in the back, yet all of them perished."

"John, that's not fair," she protested. "You've stolen the first word of my pentameter in order to make one of the worst final spondees or trochees I ever heard. Never mind. All by a hidden death, all by a treacherous death."

Those who arose and took arms to fight against Roman aggression

Lie here exhibiting tokens of valour supreme:

None of them died from a wound in the back, yet all of them perished,

All by a hidden death, all by a treacherous death.

"It's rather a lame elegiac pair," she concluded.

"Never mind about the English," her father said. "The Greek is good enough. You mark my words—if Metaxas continues to cultivate the friendship of the Romans they'll think he's afraid of them, and one day there will be a stab in the back. Not on the field of battle. No Italian will ever have a chance to stab a Greek

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in the back on the field, but there'll be treachery somehow somewhere. Where's Corinna?"

"Engaged in writing an essay for me on the causes of the Great Rebellion," John said.

"It's dreadful the way you keep that poor child at it, John," his father-in-law told him. "Humph, there'll be a great rebellion in Greece if the King doesn't look out. Phew, what weather!" he ejaculated, gazing out of the window at the monotone of grey and dirty white. "Never mind, by the middle of March it'll be lovely. You mark my words. Still, Metaxas apart, I'm so happy I don't care what the damned weather does."

"Dearest Father," Euphrosyne murmured, with a tender smile.

Word came from Italy that Julius and Sebastian expected to reach Lipsia on the morning of Tuesday, March 23rd, and the sun had celebrated his entrance into Aries on the previous Sunday with a day of perfect serenity. The hills were splashed with scarlet and purple anemones. The peach-trees were fountains of rosy blossom. The crocuses were aflame among the aromatic brushwood. Theodore Ladas and Euphrosyne left the car at the Orthodox Cathedral: Corinna drove on with John to the Mass of Palm Sunday at the Latin Cathedral.

"It's also St Benedict's Day," John reminded his daughter whose complexion had lost the almond-blossom of her first adolescence and now vied again with the peach-blossom that blushed across the austere countryside. They had alighted from the car and were walking up the steps of the narrow footway that led to the summit of the conical hill crowned by the cathedral. "I think your visit to Monte Cassino that day, followed by Sebastian's visit afterwards to compose his violin and piano sonata, must have appealed to that great saint's benignity toward youth. You'd better give him a word of gratitude in your prayers. We haven't heard the sonata yet. I'm looking forward to that."

"I'm looking forward to everything so much," Corinna declared, "that I'm not really capable of separating one thing from another. I'm spinning inside like a top."

"Have you confided in Mairi at all?"

"No, I've said nothing. I very nearly did this morning when

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I was driving her down to Mass, but I decided to wait until after Sebastian came."

"I've been thinking about the immediate future," John went on, "and if his father agrees I shall suggest that Sebastian can stay on here for the next two or three months at the end of which time you can be engaged, if at the end of that time you find you both want to be. Then I suggest another separation of at least six months. . . ."

"We'd be able to write to one another?" Corinna asked anxiously.

"Oh, naturally . . . by Jove, these steps are pretty fierce, aren't they?" John exclaimed, stopping for a moment to get his breath and gaze back at the great wreath of islands upon that sparkling sky-blue sea.

"Darling, are you getting old? I don't think so."

"Certainly not. These steps would puff anybody who was not sustained either by the levitation of religious rapture or of first love. Well, to resume. Then you could see something of each other again next winter, and then . . . well, I see no reason why you shouldn't be married in June next year. You'll only be seventeen and a half, but that seems to me a very sensible age to be married when a girl has had the chance you have had to test her emotion, her will, and her stability."

"I can't embrace you here, darling, because there are six nuns trudging up just behind us, but I really do adore you. And Euphrosyne has been marvellous. I think Mr Ladas will be glad when he hears about Sebastian and me, don't you?"

"Good lord, yes," John exclaimed. "If there were a god of marriage he'd qualify for the position. He'd sound impressive bellowing the bans from the top of Olympus."

On the following morning it was decided to remove the mats from the *portokallon*, and Euphrosyne, John, and Corinna went down to watch the gardeners at work. In the green twilight the oranges hung like lamps above the dark earth patterned with the little flowers of spring, with love-in-a-mist and pale-yellow wood-sorrel and taller creamy-yellow turban ranunculus, and with myriads of white violets, their sharp fragrance piercing the heavy sweetness of the waxen orange-blossom. Through the cracks in the matting the silver Aegean flashed and winked like stars in the dark tree-tops of winter.

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Slowly the great mats were rolled up to let in the salty sunlit air, to open the view of the islands floating like immense chalcedonies in the sun's eye, and to reveal the crescent of golden sand, on which upon this serene March morning the silver southward-stretching sea broke with the languor of May, and the rocky horns with their twin temples that bounded the cove to west and east.

"There stands Aphrodite in her mantle of carmine and gold," said Euphrosyne, pointing to the back of the grove. "And Spring has emptied her flowers upon the ground, and there are the Graces—Thalia, Aglaia and . . .

"Heaven-cylept Euphrosyne," John put in.

"But Zephyr is asleep somewhere upon this tranced day, and as for Eros he is not going to waste any more arrows upon this grove. He found his mark here many years ago, and Corinna he wounded mortally when as Cupid he celebrated the Vigil of his mother Venus in Italy. We can none of us sing *Cras amet qui nunquam amavit*. All three of us will sing instead *quique amavit cras amet*.

"There is a song of Herrick's that Corinna can sing to herself here. Do you remember what was scratched with a diamond pencil upon the window at Nanphant?"

"Indeed I do," Corinna replied fervidly. "I've said it to myself a thousand times, I think, during these last two years.

*So when on you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade,
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drowned with us in endless night.
Then while time serves, and we are but decaying,
Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying."*

When they were walking up again to the house Euphrosyne said suddenly:

"John, will you go on, please? I want to talk a little while with Corinna."

They turned aside from the cliff path and rested on a curved stone seat in one of the gazebos where in a corner shaded by a myrtle a clump of those little deep blue anemones that fear the full heat of the sun scarcely ventured to peep above their delicate foliage.

"Was that verse of Herrick scratched upon the pane for you or for your mother?" Euphrosyne asked.

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"I expect it was scratched for her," Corinna replied. "Father was always scratching bits of poetry in Greek, Latin, French, Italian, and English on window-panes until when I was about eight I dropped his diamond pencil into the lily-pool, and he was rather annoyed."

"I wish I had known your mother," Euphrosyne sighed. "I think she was a woman whom I should have very greatly admired. All that John has told me about her fills me with respect, and I do not lavish respect upon women. Yes, I wish I had known her. I was seized with a pang just now that she cannot be here on this vigil of your happiness. You were ten years old when she died . . . and John lost his mother when he was still younger, and I lost my mother when I was the same age as you. They are tragic, these mothers who leave the world too soon, and do not see what happiness they by their lives have made for others." Euphrosyne was silent for a few moments before she went on. "I want you to realize, Corinna, that I fell in love with your father when I met him first. He was inclined to fall in love with me, but I was not encouraging because I would not have wanted somebody to fall in love with me like that. So I had what at first I must confess was the severe mortification of watching him fall in love with somebody else who I did not really think was capable of developing in the way he would have expected her to develop. However, I conquered what was of course jealousy and I was truly grieved when the tragedy happened. She was such a pretty little girl; but she *was* very much a little girl, and although she was eighteen she was younger than you are at sixteen. Then when he married your mother and I saw him again I understood that he was completely happy with her, and I was glad because I still loved him with all my heart. I had made up my mind not to marry anybody else. I had my poetry. I was not alone or feeling myself quite wasted. When he brought you here the summer before last it did not seem to me that there was a gulf between us. We had written to one another very little. Yet there seemed no broken strands to pick up and weave together again. And when he wrote to ask me if I would marry him there were no doubts or hesitations in my mind. There was really nothing for me to say except a simple 'yes'. And when you arrived last December just in time for my fortieth birthday it seemed to me quite natural that we should be married immediately. However,

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I'm glad the conventions were maintained so that you were able to buy yourself all those nice clothes in Athens. I am now utterly happy, and I want you to know that my happiness owes a great deal to the happiness which your mother was able to give to your father. So please believe that she will always be in my mind and that my devotion to you, quite spontaneous though it was from the moment I saw you, has in it also some of my gratitude to your mother."

"Euphrosyne, I do love you very much. You do know that, don't you?" Corinna asked earnestly.

"My dear, I feel your love all the time. And that brings me to one other thing I wanted to ask you. If your father and I should have a child, would you mind? Please speak frankly."

"No, of course I shouldn't mind. If it were a boy I should like to be the other way round what father was to my Aunt Prudence."

"There was a charming girl! And a very courageous girl," Euphrosyne affirmed with warmth. "Mind you, I don't know that this child is a very likely affair. However, we shall see. It would be a supreme felicity, but if it should not be granted I will not be less content."

"I hope I'll have children. In fact I'd like to have rather a lot," Corinna said.

"You are so wise, and you will have them when you are young which is the time to have children. That is my only doubt. I wonder whether your father and I are not too old for the best happiness of the child. But after all he—I have somehow set my heart on 'he'—will be able to have delightful brothers and sisters that you will provide for him. That he will be their uncle is so ridiculous. But dear me, I am talking idle nonsense now. Thank you for listening so sympathetically. And now you can again give all your attention to to-morrow. I suggest that you drive down alone to meet them. Don't you think that is a good idea? Then when your future father-in-law is preoccupied with meeting me and my father, not to mention your own father, you and Sebastian can slip away. I think there could be no better journey's end for lovers meeting than the *portokallon* of Grazia di Dio."

Euphrosyne picked a tiny sprig of myrtle and gave it to Corinna.

"There are some leaves of Aphrodite's own flower. Put them away in your favourite book of poetry in memory of this *per-vigilium*."

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"I have a volume of Herrick with me. I'll put the myrtle against the poem to Corinna."

"I think it is a pleasant old-fashioned sentimental emotion to commemorate happy hours and blessed places with the flowery ghosts of them in poetry books. Come, my Corinna, come, let's go a-maying," Euphrosyne murmured to herself. "You are a fortunate young woman, you know. To love so young and so truly and to be loved with equal youth and truth."

"I hope to goodness you'll like Sebastian," Corinna exclaimed in sudden apprehension.

"Don't be afraid of that,

*Eyes which you found crystalline
Will not seem opaque to mine.*

"Who wrote that couplet?"

"It just occurred to me at that moment. Come along, we have sucked enough nectar from the day. It is time to apply ourselves to so ordinary a meal as lunch."

About half an hour before lunch on the following day Mairi Macdonald was sitting sewing by the window of Corinna's room which looked eastward across the olives to the limestone height of Mount Elias in the middle of the island.

*"Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine the lily-maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber toward the East
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot,"*

John had quoted to his daughter when on her sixteenth birthday this became her own room, not merely the room in which she would stay for a season at Grazia. "But I know you're apt to feel superior to Tennyson."

"Not to *Maud*," Corinna had protested.

"Oh no, of course not," her father had laughed. "Maud was just seventeen, and besides being tall and stately must have been a poet's love while she was still sixteen."

It was not as large a room as most of the others at Grazia, and it was contained within the space of one of the shallow cupolas that

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billowed across the expanse of roof so that the ceiling was domed. The walls were white, the floor of unbleached chestnut-wood partly covered by three or four Macedonian rugs. Upon the mantelpiece stood the travelling-clock in its case of crimson morocco-leather which had belonged first to John's mother and had been given by John's father to her own mother. On one side of it was the sea-encrusted Aphrodite Sebastian had given her: on the other was the long wooden spoon of the *zampognari*. Before it lay the rainbow-tinted lachrymatory Geoffrey Noel had found among the ruins of Minerva's cape and the pitted terra-cotta head of Minerva herself which had been treasured by her mother: upon it lay the silver penny of Mary Queen of Scots Archie Beaton used to keep in his snuff-box. The narrow bed was a high Venetian four-poster of the sixteenth century with a valance of reddish scalloped leather. There was a prie-dieu beyond the bed with the Medici reproduction of the Memling triptych hanging on the wall above. On the prie-dieu itself was a tall baroque crucifix. The only other pictures were a photograph of her mother, an eikon of the Blessed Virgin and Child, and two small copperplate engravings of the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus*. An ambry in the thick outside wall had been turned into bookshelves and the carved doors lay flat against the wall on either side. Most of the space was taken up by Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline poetry and drama with the Oxford books of English, French, and Italian verse, three volumes of Dante bound in vellum, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Mrs Ewing's tales, the two *Alices*, Campbell's *Tales of the West Highlands*, Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, Hudson's *Wild Life at the Land's End*, Meredith's *Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, all Jane Austen's novels, Mrs Gaskell's *Cranford*, James Stephens' *Crock of Gold*, a volume of H. D.'s poems, and four volumes of poems by Euphrosyne.

The travelling-clock chimed the half-hour after noon as Corinna dressed in a light tweed of blue and cream came into the room.

"*A Mhuire Mhathair!* O Mary Mother, you're as red as a rowan," Mairi gasped in Gaelic. "Did you run all the way up the cliff?"

"No, but Sebastian has asked me to marry him, and we're going to be engaged fairly soon and perhaps we'll be married in June next year."

"*M'eudail*, what are you telling me?"

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"It's true, Mairi, it's all gloriously marvellously sublimely true!"

"And what will your father be saying?"

"He knows. He knows. He says we can be. So does Uncle Julius. And Sebastian loves me. We love each other madly."

"Oh, well, well, and your father's usually so wise," Mairi commented with a shake of the head.

"I'll tell you about it later. I will really, Mairi dear. And now be an angel and leave me alone here because I don't want to go down to lunch with burning cheeks." She looked at herself in the mirror. "I'll go along and dip my face in cold water first and then come back and sit here alone quietly."

"Indeed, I would think so," Mairi advised, as she was following Corinna out of the room, still shaking her head, "Ach, look at that now," she exclaimed, "the sight of your cheeks put everything out of my mind. Mr Ogilvie's just after leaving a letter for you on the bed."

Corinna came back, cheeks still glowing in spite of the cold water, to see lying on the embroidered Rhodian coverlet the note enclosed in Leonora's letter to John of a month ago.

BELMORE HOUSE

February 21st, 1937

My darling Corinna,

Sebastian has just told his father and me about you and him. At first I'll have to admit the news took us both rather aback. I suppose we thought of you as still such a little girl, and I'm sure if your dear father had told us two years ago about this lovely romance we would both have been truly staggered. As it was, your father handled everything just perfectly and we feel that we have no right to look wise and murmur about your both being too young to know your own minds. I daresay that would hold good for a lot of young people, but that's because of the way young people are educated nowadays. Your education has been designed to develop your mind early, and that's that. And dear Sebastian has had a pretty good experience of life on his own during the last two years and more. And his father was even more precocious.

I don't believe I have to tell you that nothing could give us greater joy than to have you as a daughter-in-law, and I don't

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see why you shouldn't be married sometime next year. God bless you, dearest little daughter-in-law to be, and make all your life as happy as it will be seeming when you read this letter which I've asked your father to give you at a fitting moment. Julius will have the pleasure of telling you himself how ardently we welcome you to our hearts, and I hope it won't be too long before I will be able to tell you also. Bless you again, honey. I wish you could have heard our somewhat taciturn Sebastian talking about you. He really chattered. With love and a great big hug from

Your always loving Aunt Leonora

Corinna sat on the edge of the bed in a dream, leaning against one of the tall fluted posts at the foot, the letter in her lap. The stillness of the March day was rarefied within this virginal room to what would have seemed a vacuum but for the quick tick-tick of the clock and the beating of her own heart. She closed her eyes for a moment, as she felt herself sinking back into Sebastian's arms and on her lips his lips in a long kiss that was the consecration of those twenty-seven months which had gone by since that winter evening in Citrano.

How sweet it had been of his mother to write to her like that, and with that letter it would be so much easier to face the prospect of the talk that must be at hand with Sebastian's father. He had seemed to look through and through her this morning on the quay with those eyes of his that were so like Sebastian's. And then all that had mattered for the next half-hour was that she should drive the car as coolly as if she were driving back to Grazia red mullet fresh caught that morning instead of her lover. She jumped up from the bed as the elfin chimes sounded one o'clock and went across to her desk in the window to write at once a letter to Sebastian's mother:

GRAZIA DI DIO

March 23, 1937

Darling darling Aunt Leonora,

I have this moment found your letter which Father left for me on my bed. I read it when I came to my room to quieten my heart and look fit to appear at lunch. I drove Uncle Julius and Sebastian from the harbour when they arrived at nine

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o'clock, and then Euphrosyne who is an angel told me to take Sebastian and show him the portokallon, which is an orange-grove beside the most exquisite yellow sandy beach at the foot of the cliff on which this lovely old house is built. I long to show it to you. Every day of that summer before last I used to spend an hour or two alone there with my thoughts of Sebastian far away. And it was there he held me in his arms not yet an hour ago. I love him more than I could ever tell even him, and so I cannot hope to tell anybody else how much. Father hopes Sebastian will be able to stay for three months here, and then thinks we should separate again, but not without letters this time, until perhaps January when I'll be seventeen, and then he says perhaps we can be married in June next year if you and Uncle Julius agree. And you say you don't see why we shouldn't be married next year. Oh, can it really be I who am writing this? I'll write a longer letter soon, but I had to write this now or burst into tears, and I don't think my cheeks will stand tears on top of everything else. Thank you, darling Aunt Leonora, for your blessing. I promise always to be your most loving

Corinna

She put the letter in an envelope and sealed it. Then she went to the prie-dieu beside her bed and knelt there in a prayer without words, resting upon the love of God until the clock chimed half-past one and she floated in an ecstasy down toward the murmur of voices and the chink of glasses where in the great *loggia* the people in *Grazia di Dio* were gathered to drink their ouzo or mastic before lunch.

John did not demand any music of Julius and Sebastian on the evening of their arrival; but next day, which was the eve of the Annunciation, he asked that after dinner they might hear the sonata Sebastian had composed two years ago. On the morning of the 25th they would all be crossing to the island of Tenos to join in the celebration of Greek Independence Day.

"Glad I'm too feeble to go to-morrow," Theodore Ladas growled. "Independence is a mockery with this preposterous tyranny to which the country has submitted. I'll be happier here

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with the past. I wish your brother would come out and visit us some time, Stern. He had a wonderful grasp of the realities of the situation when war broke out. A fine fine brain."

"So they prosecuted him as a communist, Mr Ladas," said Sebastian.

"Oh well, he was one," Julius put in. "You can't make a hero of him over that. He was looking for trouble."

"I hope they had a better case against him, Stern, than Metaxas and this witch-finder of his, Maniadakis, have against our so-called Greek communists, the vast majority of whom are democratic liberals."

"Oh, they had a good case against him all right," Julius declared.

"Well, did they, Julius?" John argued. "There was a lot of hysteria about Bolshevism at the time. Anyway, it seems to me ridiculous now to refuse his services in the Mediterranean on account of what happened nearly twenty years ago. I admit Emil was a pacifist while there still seemed a chance of averting another war, but he's always a realist, and realism about Russia is what we want now."

"Have it your own way, John," Julius replied, "but Sebastian hasn't managed to convert me to the notion that Stalin's communism is something quite different from the original article. As far as I'm concerned it's an infernal creed whether the head man of the show is a mummy in a glass case or a Muscovite Napoleon."

"What about resolving all differences of political opinion in music?" Euphrosyne suggested. "Have you tried our piano, Sebastian? We had it tuned last week. I hope you don't dislike an Erard?"

"I'm not too fond of an Erard," he replied. Then with a grin he added, "Still, Paderewski managed to strum on an Erard, and I like this one of yours better than most. It wants playing on, though."

"We shan't complain of that, Sebastian," said Euphrosyne.

He walked across to the piano, and Julius took from the case the Amati violin which had once belonged to that younger sister of Leonora's who had died before he ever met the Blakistons first in that autumn of 1912.

"I wish the *sala* were still lighted by candles," Euphrosyne said. "Candlelight is the best of all for music. But Father was deter-

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mined to lead Lipsia in up-to-dateness and we've had electricity since the time of the Balkan wars."

"Candlelight!" the veteran scoffed as he took his seat near the open fireplace heaped high with crackling logs, for the breath of winter still hung about the night air. Seated in that high-backed Venetian armchair, its leather parched, its gilded legs tarnished by two centuries, the master of Grazia di Dio might have served as a model for Van Dyck or Velasquez. The pointed white beard and hollow cheeks, the thin aquiline nose, the fine pale hands grasping the heads of the two lions carved on the arms of the chair, the spindrift hair, and the dark eyes bright with immediate life not kindling into a brief flicker like embers. Yes, Van Dyck or Velasquez would have known how to immortalize him. . . . John uttered an ejaculation of impatience.

"What is the matter, John?" his wife asked.

"Just a sudden exasperation with the futility of almost all contemporary painting," he replied.

Euphrosyne was sitting near him at the other end of the long low settee covered with a figured cramoisy velvet much faded. Corinna in a white silk dress sprigged with forget-me-nots and columbines sat in the shadows behind the master of the house.

From the central level of the ceiling between the four great shallow domes hung a rococo glass chandelier whose pink and blue cupids and love-knots and garlands wanted the wax-candles of the eighteenth-century Venice whence it came rather than the mock candles of electric light.

"I think I'll switch off the chandelier," Euphrosyne said. "Sebastian has lights at the piano and his father says he wants no more than that."

So the great *sala* was darkened except for that glowing pool of music in the far corner, and the listeners became shadows.

"Sonata for violin and piano in F. There are four movements—*allegro*, *adagio cantabile*, *tema con variazioni*, *presto*," Sebastian announced gruffly.

When John watched Julius it seemed fantastic that at fifty-one and grown so much bulkier in the last two or three years he could still give to his violin the touch of youth this Mozartian *allegro* demanded and without which it might have sounded artificial. He was back in another March thirty-seven years ago when a boy just

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over fourteen, banished from the concert platform on account of illness, used to dress himself every evening in white waistcoat and white silk tie and sit moodily in a corner of the room, his bushy black eyebrows meeting in a scowl when spoken to. Then it had been fantastic that so uncanny a kid should be able to weave what had seemed to his own untrained ear that incomprehensible pattern of sound as he played the Bach Partita in D minor.

Allegro . . . March 1900. . . That was when he had supposed himself madly in love with Connie Fenwick, and in March a year later he had fallen in love with Rose Medlicott. She had been picking daffodils on the lawn at Medlicott Hall when he saw her first, picking daffodils by the light of the moon, daffodils . . . in another week *Golden Corinna* would be blooming unregarded on the island . . . daffodils by the light of the moon . . . they had fallen in love with each other at first sight . . . *adagio cantabile* . . . yes, it was a lovely melody . . . that mossy bank by the wood's edge out of the east wind . . . it was there they first kissed, and when he asked her why she was so pale she had told him she had never kissed anybody before . . . and from far away a huntsman's horn had sounded thinly over the pastures and wind-bleached ploughlands . . . *adagio cantabile* . . . and April in that cottage Miriam had taken to help him see more of Rose than otherwise he would have been able to . . . and May 1901 . . . sitting in that box high up at Covent Garden . . . both of them eighteen years old . . . and passion stirring to the music of *Tristan and Isolde* . . . and the dance at the Empress Rooms afterwards . . . and the drive back to Portman Square through a May dawn . . . Rose blowing a kiss from the tip of her finger . . . Rose passing through the solid Early Victorian portal like a ghost in her organdie ball dress . . . Rose passing out of his life . . . *adagio cantabile* . . . Lady Warburton, whose youngest daughter, the Honourable Elizabeth Falconer, was married recently to Viscount Cheltenham, the son of the Marquis of Tewkesbury, K.G. . . . Lady Warburton, portly and massive in her mid-fifties, her life's work accomplished in having married her three daughters to the heirs of peers of the realm . . . she would not lack good company at the Coronation next May, that ghost in her organdie ball dress of May 1901 . . . *adagio cantabile*. . .

John looked across to where Corinna was sitting in the shadows, and then as the second movement stopped, and Julius tightened one

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of his strings, John leaned across the settle and took Euphrosyne's hand.

"That was a lovely movement, John. Quite lovely, I think."

"I was at the back of the east wind," he told her.

"Long before we knew one another," she murmured.

"Yes, with a love whose blossoms never set, when you, my dear, were not much past being just four years old."

The theme of the third movement started, a grave rather perplexed little theme it sounded . . . really, he was an exceptional young man . . . "*John, I don't believe that boy of mine has looked even once at any other girl let alone twice, and what's more I don't believe he ever will look twice at any other girl or woman. I tell you I was prepared to argue it out with him when he first told me about it after he came back from Russia, but he just extinguished me over Corinna. I can stand up to him over communism all right. Yes, that's the way calf-love has taken him and I wouldn't bet a dime he'll remain a communist, but I'll bet every dollar I've got he knows his mind about Corinna. Well, John, I think God's been pretty good to us*" . . . a surge of gratitude rose in John's heart . . . *first variation* . . . suddenly there recurred to him the expression on Sebastian's face upon that day at Tigh nan Ròn when, as he finished playing for the second time the arietta and variations from that last piano sonata of Beethoven's, he heard Corinna's voice calling through the crystalline air of that January day over three years ago. 'I believe he was in love with her then,' he almost ejaculated aloud. He looked across to the face of the piano player now as if it would answer his unspoken question . . . *second variation* . . . and Sebastian seemed to be once more on the edge of seven years old in another January sitting on a gyratory stool twisted to the extent of its height and playing some early sonata of Mozart to himself on a cottage Metzler of yellow satinwood, his curls fused by the pale wintry sunlight with the satinwood of the instrument. . . .

"*You might play again for me sometime.*"

"*I don't suppose I will, I like playing best to myself. Say, Mother?*"

"*Yes?*"

"*That sure is a bum piano.*" . . . And his dark eyebrows meeting above his nose, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his corduroy knickerbockers, he was striding out of the room . . . *third variation* . . . in the Torre Saracena a few months later . . . Sebastian trying a

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few notes on his recently tuned Bechstein and finding one or two notes wrong . . . Sebastian commenting on his pictures . . . himself apparently deep in a book and Sebastian, believing himself disregarded, sitting down to the despised Bechstein and improvising variations to the nursery rhyme melody of *Dames, get up and bake your pies*, looking over his shoulder suspiciously from time to time to make sure no undue attention was being paid to him . . . and then the small boy had started another Mozart sonata, the melodies of which had set him off wondering what all those children would be doing in another twenty years . . . and he had felt a sudden sharp presentiment of the world's difficulty for those children . . . the twenty years were not fulfilled yet . . . oh, yes, yes, let them marry next year . . . the Germans were bent on destroying another generation . . . if they could not be happy themselves nobody else should be happy . . . *presto* . . . on, on, on, on . . . mount the four horses of the Apocalypse . . . and if war did come the whole world must inevitably be involved again . . . Sebastian, Padraig, Yan, Arthur, yes, and perhaps David and Noll, and Richard and Hugh Pendarves, Tom Keigwin and Roger Vivian, yes, and Charlie Hanshaw and Bert Finningley, and oh, God . . . perhaps even Prudence's Simon and Jeremy and Leonora's Wolfgang . . . *presto* . . . was it really too late to avert the calamity? would not any sacrifice be justified? . . . on, on, on, on . . . make an honest attempt to secure a Russian alliance now? Offer that filthy little squid in Berlin to return their damned colonies? . . . *presto* . . . so much ado to put a king off his throne, so little ado to avert a worse war than any man had contrived to wage yet . . . on, on, on, on . . . humanity sliding down into the abyss and politicians trying to save themselves and humanity by holding on to one another's coat tails . . . *presto* . . . yes, Sebastian and Corinna might have three or four years of peace if they were married next year . . . but that last letter from Camille Varenne had been so pessimistic about the state of France . . . he was foretelling war next year as a likelihood . . . and James had sent a scrawl from Pekin to say the Japanese were out to conquer all Asia . . . on, on, on, on . . .

The sonata was finished.

"I think Opus One is splendid," John declared.

"You played that last movement like a wizard, Father," said the composer. "I think I'll mark it *presto con fuoco*, only I don't

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believe there's another fiddler would live up to the fire like you."

"Well, Corinna, what do you think of your Mozartian communist now?" asked her future father-in-law.

"It's not fair to put questions like that," Euphrosyne protested. "I don't believe any of us is qualified to express more than enjoyment, without involving ourselves in an attempt to display the least musical intelligence. You enjoyed the sonata, didn't you, Father?"

"Set me off dreaming about Oxford," said the old man. "A fellow at the House—forgotten his name—used to give parties and get the musical nobs up from London. I'm talking of sixty years ago now. I liked that sort of gallop at the end. What was the name of that pack I used to hunt with?"

"The Bicester!" John suggested.

"No, I did hunt of course sometimes with the Bicester. But it wasn't my favourite."

"The Heythrop?"

"That's it. By G——, it must be half a century and more since I heard the name. You ought to have given Corinna a chance to try a bit of hunting."

"Pegasus would be the only mount that would content her," John said. "She's going to learn to fly if Sebastian lets her."

"I wouldn't," the old man declared. "Sebastian, my boy, take my advice and put your foot down now."

"But, Mr Ladas," Corinna protested, "flying isn't nearly as dangerous as hunting."

"What? I never heard such a barefaced proposition put forward before," the old man exclaimed.

"It's no use, Nestor," said his daughter, "your wisdom will only be accounted prejudice by the young."

"Julius," John asked, "I wonder if you and Sebastian will give me the pleasure of playing another sonata in F major?"

"You mean the Beethoven, I suppose?" Julius asked. "It's a long time since I played that."

"Listen, everybody," John said. "Almost thirty-seven years ago a young man of fourteen who had been invalided for a long while from the concert platform suddenly became tough and he chose this sonata as one of those with which he would make his reappearance

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at the Bechstein Hall in the autumn of 1900."

"Is that so, Father?" Sebastian asked with interest.

"Ah, but wait a minute. In Paris he had seen a girl pianist—I can't remember her name, but she had two blond plaits and a pair of big porcelain-blue eyes—and she was to be his partner."

"Renée Noirtier," said Julius reflectively.

Sebastian shuddered.

"Gosh, I saw plenty of that kind of thing in Leipzig," he muttered.

"Your father thought her lovely," John laughed.

"Hell, I didn't think anything of the kind, John. I wanted somebody who couldn't possibly overplay me in those two chamber concerts I gave that autumn. I wasn't too sure of myself after being all that while away from the concert platform."

"I didn't get a chance to hear your concert," John said. "But I remember your playing the F major Sonata with your mother at Fontainebleau on a hot heavy night in August after you'd caught those crimson-underwings. And I remember your mother turning round to tell me that this was often called the Spring Sonata and my being relieved to find that the music sounded as simple as the music of nursery rhymes. And when it was over I quoted from Keats's *Eve of St Mark* 'primroses by sheltered rills', and Emil told me not to get pictorial."

"Well, he was right," Sebastian said firmly.

"Oh, your father took my part on that occasion, and then he and his mother had an argument about Renée Noirtier whom Emil condemned as an affected little pussy-cat."

"I expect he was right about that too," Sebastian insisted.

"We must hear this sonata after all these reminiscences," Euphrosyne said.

The players settled themselves again in that pool of light; the shadowy listeners sat with their dreams.

Allegro . . . the rippling melody was as fresh played by a Julius of middle-age as the yellow bloom upon those butterflies with which he and Emil and himself had commemorated the summer of 1900 for Miriam . . . 'oh, my dears, my dears, the golden minutes of this golden summer are staying with us' . . . the voice of Miriam when she beheld that multitude of clouded-yellows in a great clover-field on the outskirts of the forest seemed audible again in the notes of

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this Erard played by her grandson . . . *allegro* . . . grey and almost transparent now those butterflies in their basket of filigree . . . he must write to Miriam all about Sebastian and Corinna . . . and she must meet Euphrosyne . . . that would be next autumn when Miriam would be seventy-four . . . and at Fontainebleau when she had played this sonata with Julius she was still a month away from thirty-seven . . . *allegro* . . . time, time, time . . . was war really inevitable? . . . did the Nazis really represent the people of Germany? . . . could music like this come out of the soul of a nation that was damned? . . . time, time, time . . . was there not even yet time to avert this catastrophe? . . . were we blinded by the evil of the Nazis to the evil that was in us? . . . the outrages perpetrated by the Government of Northern Ireland on the souls and bodies of men might be less spectacular than the horrors of Dachau, but if the people of Great Britain tolerated what was done in Northern Ireland did they possess the moral strength to overcome Nazism? . . . if the people of Great Britain tolerated the Special Areas and the Means Test and the slums of Glasgow and the cynical murder of a town like Jarrow and the betrayal of agriculture to import cheap food for wage-slaves, what moral front could they present to the people of Germany? . . . if the people of Great Britain were too little interested in Europe to attempt to sway the policy of their Government towards an appreciation of Continental needs how could they expect the smaller nations of Europe to stand beside them and resist the German lust to rule and organize other people? . . . *allegro* . . . time, time, time . . . was there not still time to avert the catastrophe? . . . perhaps Neville Chamberlain might achieve what Baldwin had failed to achieve if, as presumably he would, he became Prime Minister after the Coronation . . . *adagio molto espressivo* . . . oh, this exquisite exquisite melody . . . next week he must take Sebastian and Corinna to that old grey-walled garden of lilac and roses shut out from everything except the Aegean . . . or had it become an impenetrable thicket of briars since he and Zoe trysted in it twenty years ago? . . . and they must all visit Icaros . . . Padraig was beginning his final spurt now for the schools . . . he would enjoy himself out here with a degree achieved and the prospect of an appointment in the Consular Service drawing nearer . . . and if war came? . . . none of them could escape the toils . . . the youth of the country would be demanded instantly this time . . . we don't want

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to lose you, but we know you've got to go . . . there would be no 'ought' about it in another war . . . *adagio molto espressivo* . . . and if war came Greece might be on the side of Germany this time . . . Greece was already deeply entangled in the German financial net . . . and Metaxas who admired Germany was now seeking the friendship of Italy . . . that might mean exile for the people of Grazia di Dio in two or three years . . . would Euphrosyne languish in the cold north? . . . He put out his hand to clasp hers, and she turned to look at him . . . *adagio molto espressivo* . . . how deep and tranquil were her eyes . . . she was not made of stuff that languishes anywhere . . . constant as marble, my Euphrosyne. . . .

Scherzo . . . it wouldn't really have been any use to try to carry the movement in Scotland any further now . . . there was a sense of futility right through the country . . . there was no will to be independent . . . and blood demanded blood in payment . . . perhaps one ought not to shrink from that fact . . . the Irish had faced up to it, and once partition was a thing of the past, what country in Europe could contemplate its future with greater equanimity? . . . *scherzo* . . . once partition was done with, Ireland would lose the self-consciousness of the cripple and, facing the world without a grievance, become a refuge for the spirit of man exhausted by the convulsions that would probably last until the second millennium . . . *scherzo* . . . yes, it was all very well trying to recognize the faults of one's own country, but blast it, what wars in Europe would there have been since Napoleon's attempt to unify it unless the Germans had started them? . . . and one of their vile habits was to secure whether by a trick or an outrage that war should always have to be declared on them . . . masochists in words and sadists in deeds . . . if they did manage to force another war upon the world, and there seemed little chance now of preventing them, the only hope for Europe after victory was to disperse them over the face of the globe . . . *scherzo* . . . *scherzo* . . . *scherzo* . . . if it were as easy as that . . .

Rondo . . . he must remember to ask Sebastian how he had been succeeding with that project to make a complete concerto of those fragments of Beethoven's Sixth . . . this innocent tune . . . was the soul of the German people more complicated than the soul of its greatest composer? . . . must there not exist somewhere a fountain-head of primal simplicity which could be unlocked by the right key?

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. . . *rondo* . . . or was such a tune as this a vestige of a former state of humanity? . . . had the world outlived the ability to produce such tunes without affectation? . . . was that *adagio cantabile* of the second movement of Sebastian's sonata a mere echo, or was it an authentic voice of the present? . . . dared one aspire to hope for the revivification of Western man by the present generation, or would they under the stress of war reject what little was left of supernatural belief? . . . *rondo* . . . sick, how deathly sick the soul of modern man . . . suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven . . . what piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! . . . *rondo* . . . and all that paragon had achieved was to acquire an exaggerated conception of his rights as an individual and a most inadequate appreciation of his duties . . . mechanical progress from printing to flying abused . . . the ideal of popular education corrupted . . . humanitarian theory substituted for religious practice . . . greater and ever greater power accorded to money . . . an illusory freedom of thought encouraged at the cost of real freedom of action . . . and at the end of it man utterly at the mercy of his own environment, the slave of self instead of the servant of God . . . a rise in the standard of living, but if another war came what a rise in the standard of dying! . . . The music stopped.

"You're looking very grave, John," Euphrosyne said to him, "as if you had been listening to Strauss rather than a tripping rondo of Beethoven."

"It was turning into a rondo of death as I thought about man's attempt to live without God."

"You were thinking of what may lie before those two young people?" she asked gently.

"And thousands upon thousands of young people everywhere," he sighed.

"You will feel less dispirited when you see Tenos to-morrow. And I shall return from our National festival with all my faith restored that this attempt to suppress democracy in Hellas will fail miserably."

"Dearest, I'm not really dispirited. I was growing quite optimistic at one time during the music about the possibility of averting

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war. I don't know why I abruptly succumbed to such a mood of gloom about the future."

"It's the emotional reaction, my dearest," she said. "But see how happy they are."

She looked across to the shadows beyond the flicker of the fire-light to where Sebastian, hunched upon a stool, was talking earnestly to Corinna.

"Father," she called, "what about bed for you?"

The master of the house was nodding in his high-backed arm-chair, and his grasp of the lions' heads on the arms was limp.

"I think I will," he said, feeling for his two canes and rising with their support. "You'll all go to bed early if you take my advice. You'll have a tiring day at Tenos to-morrow. It's been a delightful treat, this music. Good-night to you all."

Half an hour later Euphrosyne, Corinna, and Sebastian followed him to bed, leaving John and Julius sitting together by the fire in the *sala*.

"I think Sebastian is going to make it," said John.

"He's written a first-class serenade for strings—oh, really good," Julius said. "I shall do it at Birfield next autumn. He's working on a piano concerto now, he tells me."

"That sounds promising," said John, discreetly vague. "Did you have a good talk with Corinna this afternoon?"

"I certainly did. She's a great girl. It would take a much crankier educational system than yours to spoil her," Julius grinned.

"Grin away, I consider that my system has been completely justified; and mind you, I'm going to keep her hard at it till a fortnight before the wedding. June, I think, don't you? It might be within the octave of Corpus Christi."

"When I was received into the Church in 1914," Julius commented. "Well, that's a good anniversary for me."

"You shall have the anniversary, Julius, and I'll have the place. We don't want a Brompton Oratory wedding. It shall be at Kilcolly in Moidart."

"Will I have to wear a kilt?"

"No, we'll let you off the kilt. And they can spend their honeymoon at Tigh nan Ròn," John went on.

"Leonora will call us a couple of old matrons when she hears of all our arrangements," Julius laughed.

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"Yes, I remember how amused she was when I found Corinna's nurse, who comes from near Kilcolly, by the way. She marvelled at Athene's toleration."

"I guess Athene would have been pretty pleased about Sebastian and Corinna, don't you think so, John?"

"I know she would."

"You're a lucky man, John. You've found another wonderful woman in Euphrosyne."

"There was still another wonderful woman in my life, Julius, and that was your mother. I wouldn't be where I am or what I am without her. And I don't think you would be, either."

"I won't contradict you, John. *Grazia di Dio*," Julius exclaimed suddenly after a few moments of meditative silence. "Grace of God. If this house were large enough to hold the world!"

A log broke into flame, and the two friends sat staring into the fire.

"Be with us now and for ever more," John murmured. "Julius, will you do me a favour before we go to bed? Will you play me Schumann's *Träumerei* as you played it to me once in March 1900?"

Julius walked across the room to fetch his violin.

THE END OF
THE FOUR WINDS OF LOVE

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